

Clement • Kaye • Mayhar • Platt • Shirley • Schweitzer

Winter
1988

THRUST

\$2.50

No. 29

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY REVIEW



"An original mind and superior skill have combined to produce an excellent book." — *Chicago Sun-Times*

DONALD KINGSBURY

THE MOON GODDESS AND THE SON



THE STORY OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

"Thoughtful, brash, frustrating, and fascinating — a major novel sure to arouse controversy. . . . A grand experiment and a major book. . . . So read it — and be prepared to argue about it for a long time to come." — *Locus*

"He understands the future and he makes it real. And not content with that ultimate science fiction magic, he also creates the most believable and interesting female characters in science fiction. Kingsbury is likely to be the next Heinlein." — *Jerry Pournelle*

"The author of *Courtship Rite* brings to this novel of the near-future a rare sensitivity for characterization as well as an acute perception of the links between past and future. Recommended." — *Library Journal*

"Strongly recommended." — *New York Newsday*
December 1987 • 416 pp. • 65381-4 • \$3.95

BRENT
BOOKS

Distributed by Simon & Schuster
1230 Avenue of the Americas • New York, NY 10020

NOW IN PAPERBACK!



THRUST - SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY REVIEW. Issue Number 29. Winter 1988. ISSN:0198-6686. Published four times per year, March, June, September and December, by Thrust Publications, 8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877, U.S.A. Telephone: (301)948-2514.

Subscriptions: 4-issue (1-year) subscriptions: \$8.00 in the U.S.A. and \$10.00 elsewhere. 8-issue (2-year) subscriptions are \$14.00 in the U.S.A. and \$18.00 elsewhere. Make all checks to Thrust Publications, in U.S. dollars only. All subscriptions begin with the next issue. Institutional subscriptions (only) may be billed. Single copies are \$2.50 in the U.S.A. and \$3.00 elsewhere.

Back Issues: Issue numbers 5,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27 and 28 may be ordered directly from Thrust Publications for \$2.50 each, 4/\$8.00, or 8/\$14.00 in the U.S.A., and \$3.00, 4/\$10.00, or 8/\$18.00 elsewhere.

Advertising: Display advertising rates available on request. Classified ads are 20 cents per word, 20 word minimum; payment must be included with copy. Display classified advertisements are \$10.00 per column inch per issue (3-1/4" wide). Deadlines are January 31, April 30, July 31, and October 31.

Wholesale Distribution: Current issues of THRUST are available at wholesale discounts of 30-55% off, and back issues for 40-60% off, directly from Thrust Publications. Standing orders are accepted and encouraged. Write Thrust Publication for full details. THRUST is also available from the following distributors:

F&SF Book Company, Inc., P.O. Box 415, Staten Island, New York 11204.

Capital City Distribution, Inc., 2827 Perry Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53713.

Submissions: Writer and artist guidelines are sent on request. Unsolicited manuscripts and art are welcomed with return postage. The publisher accepts no responsibility for unsolicited materials. All letters of comment sent to the magazine will be considered publishable unless otherwise stated.

Contents copyright 1987 Thrust Publications. All rights revert to the writers and artists after publication. Nothing should be reprinted without permission of both the writer or artist and the publisher.

THRUST

ISSN 0198-6686
no.29
Science Fiction & Fantasy Review

CONTENTS

Impulse: Editorial by Doug Frazt.....	4
News From The Ghetto: An Unnecessarily-Detailed Report on the 1987 Worldcon by Charles Platt.....	5
Interview With Hal Clement, conducted by Tim Fitzgibbons.....	9
Make It Scream: Winners of the Alternative Convention Programming Contest by John Shirley.....	12
Where Has All the Nonsense Gone? by Ardath Mayhar.....	16
Words & Pictures: Movie Reviews by Darrell Schweitzer.....	18
Immortalism: The Long-Range View (Part VI) by Marvin Kaye.....	21
Reviews: Books, Etc. by Doug Frazt, Dean R. Lambe, Neal Wilgus, Eugene Lin, Jeremiah P. Reilly, Andrew Andrews, and Howard Coleman.....	22
Audio SF Reviews by David F. Hamilton.....	25
Counter-Thrusts: Letters by Gregory Benford, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, Anita Alverio, Janrae Frank, Dean R. Lambe, Darrell Schweitzer, George Adis and Taras Wolansky.....	28

STAFF

D. Douglas Frazt
Publisher & Editor

John G. Betancourt
Stephen P. Brown
Mark J. McGarry
Associate Editors

Ron Hamblen
Eugene Lin
Ann Morris
Roger W. Reus
Assistant Editors

Jeremiah P. Reilly
Advertising Director

Michael Bishop
David Bischoff
George Alec Effinger
Richard E. Geis
Charles Platt
Darrell Schweitzer
Charles Sheffield
John Shirley
Ted White
Contributing Editors

ARTWORK

Lori Walls.....	Cover
Alfred Klosterman.....	4,5,6,7
Jay Kay Klein (Photo).....	9
Dave Garcia.....	12
Valerie Tiley.....	16
M. B. Simon.....	21
Bradley Teare.....	22
Alan White.....	28
William Rotsler.....	30

ADVERTISING

Baen Books.....	2
Interzone.....	11
Thrust Publications.....	17
Bridge Publications.....	27
Unclassified Advertisements.....	30
Arbor House.....	31
DAW Books.....	32

IMPULSE



editorial by Doug Frazt

Welcome to **THRUST** 29, and since this is coming out one month late, Happy New Year! I have what I consider to be an excellent reason for falling a month behind schedule, though: on October 10, we added a new daughter, Erica Jean, to the Frazt family. Mother and daughter are both doing fine, and brother Alex (now 3 years old) is adapting well. The jury's still out on the father, who appears to be slowing down in his old age.

The Issue At Hand: Charles Platt leads off the issue with a lengthy and entertaining report on his experiences at this year's Worldcon in Brighton. Those of you who get Charles' own small but frequent magazine, REM, will recognize this report, since it was first published in REM:9, but I trust that most of **THRUST**'s readers will be seeing it here for the first time, since REM has a very limited circulation. Charles has been doing much of his best writing in REM of late, and I have suggested that he use excerpts from his REM material for future **THRUST** columns. Charles has already informed me that this report has begun to draw heated outcry from the folks associated with Bridge Publications, Author's Services and the Writers of the Future Contest (including A.J. himself), who appear to be questioning some of his statements regarding Bridge, New Era, WOTF and L. Ron Hubbard. **THRUST** is an open forum, and I welcome one and all to disagree with or correct anything published here. I trust that next issue's letters column will include some alternative views on events in Brighton.

Our interview is with Hal Clement, a.k.a. Harry Stubbs, recently retired science teacher and occasional practitioner in the field of hard science fiction. The interview was conducted by Tim Fitzgibbons, one of Mr. Stubbs' former students.

John Shirley returns with the winners of his Alternative Convention Programming Contest, which he initiated in **THRUST** 27. All prizes were awarded, and congratulations are due to

a number of prize winners and recipients of honorable mentions. (To see if you are among them, read the column—I will not kill the suspense by listing the names here!) I expect that these winners' ideas will serve to generate other ideas among **THRUST**'s readers, so feel free to keep submitting them in the form of letters of comment. We will try to keep track of how many of these actually make it into real-world SF conventions (if one can call SF cons real-world), and report on how they come off.

SF and fantasy author Ardath Mayhar, who has become a regular in **THRUST**'s book-review section, contributes an article with some thoughts on what's wrong with SF and fantasy today. Among her complaints are authors and reviewers who lack a proper sense of humor.

Darrell Schweitzer is back to review more SF from the big (and little) screen. This issue Darrell looks at a variety of films, including *Robocop* and Clive Barker's *Hellraiser*, and notes the decline and fall of TV's *Max Headroom*. Finishing up the issue are Marvin Kaye on immortality (Part 6), and more than enough book reviews and letters to keep anyone from getting too complacent.

A Hugo Scorecard: In last issue's editorial, I made my perilous predictions on who would win the Hugo Awards, and although I didn't do too badly, there were a few surprises.

I was right on spot regarding the novel award, but missed badly on all three short fiction categories. Silverberg's win over Shepard comes as a complete surprise; it's possible that British fans just did not care for "R&R"'s subject matter (an American-supported war in Central America). Likewise, Zelazny's convincing win over Gibson for the novella award came as totally unexpected to me. In the short story category, I picked Asimov over Bear, but the vote went 297 to 282 the other way. At least I was close. The non-fiction award going to Aldiss and

Wingrove was an easy call, as was Allens for dramatic presentation and Dave Langford's double victory for best fanzine and fan writer. I missed on fan artist as Brad Foster beat Arthur Thompson by 9 votes, and in retrospect it's probably surprising that it was so close, since Thompson, although British, hasn't been very active lately. Karen Joy Fowler won the Campbell, as I suspected she would. Terry Carr won best editor, as predicted, and Dozois was second, although not as close as I expected. And, of course, **INTERZONE** did give LOCUS a run for best semi-prozine before losing 363 to 326. **THRUST** got 67 votes on the first ballot, if one assumes that those "No Award" votes were REALLY meant as votes for **THRUST**...

Whence "Cyberpunk"? **THRUST** reader Bruce Bethke recently sent me a photocopy of his first-published short story from the November 1983 issue of **AMAZING**, which just happens to be entitled "Cyberpunk", along with a somewhat enigmatic note saying, "Say, Doug, before you run one more pompous analysis of the cyberpunk movement—or one more smug John Shirley rebuttal—I'd appreciate it if you'd take notice of the attached annoying and inconvenient fact." Hmm... Since *Neuromancer* first appeared in 1984, and I don't believe the term "cyberpunk" was widely used until after its publication, Bethke's use of the term would appear to predate everyone else by at least a year or two... Ah, Bruce Bethke: Grandfather of Cyberpunk. It has a nice ring to it. Or have I missed something important here?

Coming Attractions: With Issue 30, **THRUST** begins its 17th year of publication. Already scheduled are interviews with Nancy Springer and (if space allows) Joel Rosenberg and/or artist Boris Vallejo, Gregory Benford on "The South and Science Fiction", and more of our trusty columnists (I'm sure) than any of us can imagine—to be published in March, 1988, if things get back to normal soon. ■

**A Special
Unnecessarily-Detailed Report
on the 1987 Worldcon**

Sock Shock!

The surrealism inherent in all science-fiction conventions was amplified by trans-Atlantic displacement. I stumbled off the plane in the usual dislocated state--after three hours' sleep, it felt like 3 A.M. regardless

towels, and bed sheets. (Ideal for hangovers, I decided.) By now it was 11 A.M. local time, 6 A.M. body time, and I was ready for breakfast. Wandered along a nearby quaint little back street, experiencing traumatic spasms of intestinal aversion from smelly little caffs offering fried eggs and greasy chips for 95 pence. Passed the window of a local laundromat, glanced in--and saw Charles N. Brown, editor of *Locus*, holding a plastic basket full of wet socks.

Every human brain must have some potential singular event that raises it to a crisis of disorientation and stress. This was mine.

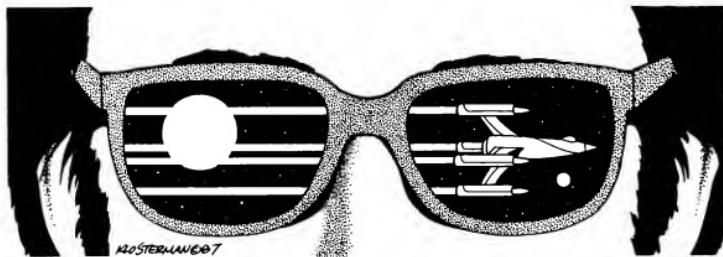
By comparison, the rest of the 1987 World Convention was a breeze, though I did spend some of it in a state of anxiety, lest Friends of

than their US contemporaries. Many, in fact, were no larger than I remembered them from twenty years ago. When I inquired why, I was told, curtly, it was because British people can't afford to eat as much as Americans; but this seems implausible. Michael Moorcock had gained a few pounds since I last saw him, but when I stopped to discuss this he stepped around me brusquely without a word. I later learned there were five people, altogether, he was refusing to talk to at the convention, myself being one. A man of principle, evidently.

90 Minutes with "Red Ken"

But you're not interested in this tawdry

NEWS FROM THE GHETTO



Charles Platt

of the glaring 8 A.M. morning sun. Took the train straight from Gatwick Airport to Brighton and a taxi to a "hotel" where the only missing element was John Cleese playing Basil Fawlty. This was my own mistake; I had foolishly trusted the official reservation system and sent Brighton City Council my cheque for ten pounds, which they cashed, and my list of hotel preferences, which they naturally ignored. After trekking for more than a mile along the sea front, I sighted large dowdy bearded people wandering up and down wearing badges, and knew I was now in the right general area. Relocated myself in a highly fashionable hotel where they put me in the "Black Rock Room," in which everything was black, including walls, furniture, bath

Lewis Shiner should berate or even physically attack me for having published an article that expropriated his most cherished pseudonym. My fears, however, proved groundless; even Steve Brown greeted me warmly, and I found myself ennobled in tranquil healing waters and golden sun, where I had braced myself for squalls and thunder. It was rather an anticlimax.

As I wandered through the Metropole Hotel, encountering strange British science-fiction people imprinted by rict of national inferiority, ill health, and deprivation, I was struck not only by their pallor and foul habits (they seemed to subsist entirely on cigarettes, warm beer, and greasy animal residues) but by how much slimmer they were

personal gossip; you're interested in the program items. Well, fortunately, I took notes. By far the most interesting event was Ian Watson's presentation of Ken Livingstone, a far-left politician who seized control of the Greater London Council (i.e., City Hall) a few years ago, and enraged Margaret Thatcher so much that she forced through a bill that abolished that entire level of local government, just to get rid of him. Livingstone promptly got himself elected to Parliament, however, and is now the British equivalent of a Congressman. His speech was unlike that of any normal politician. Some random quotes:

"Politics actually is the way you've always imagined it, in your worst moments."
"Day-to-day life in the House of Commons

is like working in a natural history museum where some of the exhibits await being stuffed."

"Ever since the acceptance of the theory of nuclear winter, nuclear weapons aren't terribly relevant any more."

"Ronald Reagan is like [1950s British Prime Minister] Anthony Eden, still trying to maintain an Empire. In 1945, America controlled fifty percent of the productive capacity of the world. Today, it's twenty-five percent. Sooner or later the Americans will come to terms with this, and we'll have a sane U.S. government."

"Most politicians are prepared to carry out any policy, so long as they keep power. Margaret Thatcher is an exception. She wants to mold history."

"The succession of crooks and useless people in the White House have sorely stretched the tolerance of European leaders. A Christian Fundamentalist would be the last straw."

"Great concentrations of power do tend to attract people who shouldn't be allowed near it."



He argued against any form of centralized government, advocated constant questioning and mistrust of all those who rise to power, breakup of Great Britain into four autonomous states, introduction of a properly populist democratic process (he compared British government to rule by a junta), more spending on scientific research, removal of all controls on gene splicing, unilateral nuclear disarmament, secession of Britain from NATO, and more. He was, he said, a long-time science-fiction fan, and proved it by alluding to recent books. His personal prediction was of a global economic collapse in the next five years that would discredit monetarism and precipitate a swing toward socialism. Not "traditional" socialism, however. With his emphasis on individual initiative and his repeated advocacy of American innovations such as the Freedom of Information Act, he sounded at times more like a libertarian. His

position was neither Left nor Right, in traditional terms, conjuring up a rather tempting vision of a totally new kind of populism. There was enough material in his speech to sustain at least a couple near-future novels.

Teatime with Dorfs

The same could hardly be said of the guest-of-honor speech by Doris Lessing. Her thesis was that "nonrealistic" fiction had preceded "realistic" fiction in the history of literature, and was the more fundamental form, even though academia still tended to sneer at it. In other words, myths and fairy tales came first; followed by the Social Novel; followed by fantastic fiction that returned to the mythic roots, so to speak. This argument validated, say, Tolkien (and Lessing's own work, conveniently enough). Unfortunately, it showed an awareness of true science fiction, which speculates within the bounds of reality is therefore both non-realistic and realistic.

As I see it, the reason for the original prevalence of "nonrealistic" fiction a few hundred years ago is that in those primitive times one's outlook was inevitably ruled by superstition. The rise of "realistic" fiction coincided with an increase in objectivity as a result of European science and commerce. By arguing for the return to "nonrealism," Lessing was really asking us to turn back the clock and surrender ourselves once more to the whims of fantasy. This retrogressive thesis was put across in such a well-mannered, relentlessly "nice" voice, using such imprecise generalizations, that everyone seemed more than happy to ignore the content and sit there uncritically enjoying the acceptance of "our" field by this respected literary figure, while basking in her grandmotherly charm.

Lessing drifted around the edges of the convention, was absent from it for long periods, had trouble pronouncing Zelazny's name when she read out nominations in the Hugo ceremony, and thus demonstrated her real lack of interest and knowledge of the field in which she decided, some years ago, to write. A few days later she wrote a feeble letter defending the convention to a national newspaper, full of vapid statements such as, "for four days . . . four seminars ran concurrently on all kinds of subjects." She mentioned that she herself had attended "seminars" on Olaf Stapledon and H. G. Wells—probably the least contemporary items in the entire program. Lessing is obviously out of sympathy and out of touch with the twentieth century.

There's no reason a "humanist" writer has to be this way, any more than an academic needs to be stuffy. Kim Stanley Robinson's work demonstrates the former, and his thesis on Philip K. Dick, which he excerpted extemporaneously in a one-hour talk at the convention, demonstrated the latter. Robinson suggested that Dick's mystical "pink beam" experience was, in fact, a stroke that preceded the one that later killed him. He paid eloquent but measured homage to Dick as a writer who was intuitive, erratic, and largely self-educated, yet very much worthy of serious critical attention. Finally, and quite correctly, Robinson emphasized the importance of turning our attention and appreciation to relatively obscure living writers (Paul Williams, please note)—such as the Strugatsky brothers, joint guests of honor,

whose speech immediately followed.

From Dorfs to Boris

I stayed for it, even though I have little interest in their work. They turned out to be uncomfortably close to one's stereotypical image of Russians: large, bombastic, phlegmatic, and full of national pride. You could imagine them sitting in a village tavern, playing dominoes, drinking, smoking, debating the meaning of life, and breaking off once in a while to joke with the barmaid.

They estimated that there are no more than 100 science-fiction writers in the U.S.S.R., and five (or fewer) science-fiction "classics." If glasnost continues, however, they hoped their country might overtake the USA in science-fiction output—although "quantity is not the prime consideration." They quoted Sturgeon's Law, that "90 percent of everything is rubbish" (I was pleased to see that this confirmed the accuracy of their translator), and defined "typical Western rubbish" as featuring the "cult of brute force, toughness, and propaganda of brainless supermanship."

Russian rubbish, on the other hand, featured "heartbreaking pink romanticism, and hypocrisy of the highest degree; superoptimistic professors and brainless didacticism." While these differences existed in the bad literature, good literature of the USSR and USA (they said) exhibited much more commonality. Following the short speech (made longer by pausing every two sentences for translation) there was question time. They finessed most political questions ("We are not political activists") but, in response to my question whether science-fiction should be relevant to the real world, agreed that it had to be, and would be worthless otherwise.

Regarding Afghanistan they stated haltingly, "I believe everything will go well," without saying for whom. Their talk was spotted with various pro-forma pleas for world peace, each of which generated enthusiastic applause.

Someone asked the Strugatskys if they had read cyberpunk and, if so, what they thought of it. The question had to be repeated, and there seemed to be some translation difficulties. Boris's eventual response: "This has not yet reached our backside. And for this we are very grateful." (Confused laughter from audience.)

Brits and Tits

Outside on the promenade, a balloon advertising Gollancz science fiction rocked in the misty breeze, crummy little stores sold "naughty" postcards and rainbow-striped rock-candy wrapped in transparent plastic, and mobs of uncouth youth sauntered around on beaches where mods and rockers had rioted just twenty years ago.

A lot of paint has fallen off the piers since then (indeed, one of them has all but rusted into oblivion), and the town looks even sleazier than it used to. The bold new concrete face of the convention center (ugly as only British architecture can be) is a low-class attempt to be high-class, and is offensive and unconvincing—just like the lobby guards at the Metropole Hotel, who arbitrarily refused admission to some convention members after midnight, imposed a classic British air of negativity ("No, you

can't do that, it's against the rules"), yet failed to prevent two robberies during the weekend.

Personally, I rather enjoyed their narrow-minded, hostile attitude; it vindicated yet again my decision to leave Britain seventeen years ago. I also enjoyed the bafflement that some British cultural traditions created in my American friends. John Silbersack, for instance (science-fiction editor at *New American Library*), exclaimed in confusion, "Wherever I look, on postcards, even in the daily newspapers, I see pictures of ugly women exposing their naked breasts. Why is this?"

Bridge Under Troubled Water

Generally speaking, the Americans seemed more puzzled than hostile toward "The Brits," as they called them, while the Brits themselves seemed mildly resentful of the American Presence, with its inevitable overtones of patronage. This, I think, explained the violence of their eventual reaction against sponsorship of events by L. Ron Hubbard's Bridge Publications, whose presence was highly visible during the weekend. The pocket program had been

course, it backfired. Hubbard's awful novel came in sixth place (after *No Award*, which placed fifth) and people hissed and booed his name anyway. Worse, an inebriated Dave Langford, who seemed to feel the two fan Hugos he had won were somehow tainted by apparent sponsorship of the ceremony by Bridge Publications, ended up in a confrontation with Fred Harris on Monday night.

Two separate sources reported the sequence of events to me as: 1) Langford bickers with Harris, then, with ironic intent, kisses him on the cheek. 2) Harris pours his beer over Langford's head. 3) Langford throws his glass at Harris, and misses. The glass smashes against the wall. 4) Langford apologizes profusely for his poor aim.

The Hubbard organization was so disturbed by this "bad P.R." that Algis Budrys arranged a conciliation meeting with Malcolm Edwards (editor at *Gollancz*, chairman of the convention), John Clute (Canadian critic resident in London; part of the London literary scene), and Peter Nichols (co-editor, with Clute, of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*). I gather that the substance of this meeting was basically a promise that Bridge

Lucasfilm, who wished to sponsor (for example) a segment of the costume contest, featuring Star Wars characters. The request was refused, just as the request from Bridge Publications should have been.

What bothers me more is the continued association of well-known authors with Writers of the Future. This can do nothing to enhance their reputations, and everything to transform the image of L. Ron Hubbard from cult leader to literary benefactor. I long since wrote an open letter to Algis Budrys in *SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE*, on these lines; I argued with Terry Carr over his editorship of the abortive Hubbard-sponsored magazine; and published a list of alleged transgressions of Scientology and Dianetics that I culled from a short afternoon of research at my local library, suggesting that these organizations were not (as Carr and Silverberg have suggested) as benevolent as, say, a self-improvement group such as est.

Fred Harris is a likable fellow. L. Ron Hubbard once wrote imaginative, effective fiction, and Budrys himself could still be one of the great literary talents in our field. At present, however, one sees a public-relations operation promoting the most mediocre work



paid for entirely by Bridge, and was cloaked in art from a Hubbard book jacket; the costume contest featured a special segment sponsored by Bridge. Bridge offered selected writers, including Lisa Tuttle and Ian Watson, fifty pounds an hour to sit at their booth offering advice to young authors; the post-Hugo party, offering an elite view of the fireworks display on the beach, was a Bridge extravaganza; and (their big blunder) they inserted an item that seemed uncomfortably like a commercial message at the beginning of the Hugo Awards Ceremony.

The message went like this. Algis Budrys appeared on stage, made it clear that the ceremony itself had not yet started, and profusely thanked convention organizers for their work. He then announced a forthcoming series of writing workshops in Britain, which would "fully validate the legacy of L. Ron Hubbard" (his exact words, from my notes) using "methods developed by Writers of the Future."

As I understand it, the intention was to impress the audience with the benevolence of L. Ron Hubbard, so that, if turned out he had won the Hugo for Best Novel, people would be less likely to rise up in wrath. Of

Publications wouldn't trespass onto the sacred territory of awards ceremonies ever again. Budrys, meanwhile, claimed he had no recollection of mentioning Hubbard's name before the ceremony. Indeed, the convention organizers had made it a condition that he should not do so.

Uberfiction!

The backlash was still not over, however. Several British-resident writers who had agreed to collaborate with Writers of the Future publicly withdrew their support, among them Lisa Tuttle and Chris Evans. The latter expressed his intention of publishing a critique on the subject.

On one level, I don't much like the hue and cry against Bridge/Hubbard. It reminds me of the tone of anti-porn crusaders, moralistically protecting "other people" from "that awful stuff." On the other hand, the sponsorship of science-fiction conventions is a sensitive issue. They have always had a unique innocence, being run by unpaid volunteers, and being pretty much devoid of commercialization. I was told that the last Los Angeles worldcon had been approached by

of a dead cult figure, with the benign side-effect of encouraging new writing talent (which would probably emerge anyway, given the health of our field and the number of short-story markets).

The only remaining mystery, as far as I'm concerned, is the nature of these new "methods" that Budrys referred to in his speech, for training Writers of the Future. It sounded as if they're developing some new kind of "uberfiction." Do we have any volunteers willing to submit themselves to the training process and then report back for deprogramming?

Croquet in the Drizzle

On the Wednesday following the convention, residual attendees made their way to Brian and Margaret Aldiss's all-day party at their country mansion (I do not exaggerate) near Oxford. I demanded to play croquet in the drizzle, Brian tolerantly disinterred the cobwebbed equipment from the tool shed, and we set it up in the disused tennis court.

Unsurprisingly, in a game as viciously competitive as this, the editors triumphed over

the relatively mild-mannered writers they were playing against, with David Hartwell (of Arbor House and Tor) winning the first game and Susan Allison (of Berkley and Ace) the second.

Back in the house, I was pleased to encounter David Wingrove, who is credited (although not on the cover of the American edition) as co-author with Aldiss of *Trillion Year Spree*, which won this year's nonfiction Hugo. I asked Wingrove whether it had been he who wrote the vicious attack on Kim Stanley Robinson (see US edition page 419), stating flatly and with little supporting argument that *The Wild Shore*, Robinson's fine, graphic first novel, was "patently a journeyman work. Too long, too dull in parts... ultimately means very little indeed.... It is a sterile, rather lifeless book."

Wingrove readily agreed these criticisms were his, although, he added, they had been more outspoken before Aldiss insisted on toning them down. His grudge against Robinson seemed to stem from praise that Robinson had received, which Wingrove felt that he didn't deserve, because he wasn't as "literary" a writer as he was generally made out to be. In a sense, then, Wingrove seemed to be criticizing other critics, although he gave the impression of attacking only the work itself. A strange thing to find in a reference book on science fiction.

"But *Trillion Year Spree* isn't a reference book," he objected at once, evidently feeling that this gave him license to say more or less whatever he liked—regardless of the obvious eventualty that the volume would certainly be used as a reference book. He also added that everyone always objected to one opinion or another in any work on science fiction. This is true enough, but doesn't explain why a demonstrably competent writer such as Robinson was singled out almost alone for severe criticism, while his contemporaries received nothing but bland praise.

The Japanese Enigma

On Saturday night at the convention, I ran into Kiyoichi Imaoka, editor-in-chief of Hayakawa SF magazine, for whom I hope soon to be writing an intermittent news column. He told me that a colleague of his, who liked to describe himself as "The Japanese Charles Platt," was at Brighton, and eager to meet me. More than this, Kiyoichi couldn't say; he'd had a few drinks, which made it harder to speak English. He suggested, however, I should come to the Japanese room party the next evening.

This I did; but "The Japanese Charles Platt" was nowhere to be found. Instead, I met Ryohel Takahashi, who had just spent forty-five hours on a cheap flight from Japan to London via Malaysia and a few other continents along the way. He explained that in his spare time he coproduced "The Japanese REM," which was news to me. He gave me a copy, but, of course, I couldn't understand it—with the exception of one item that had an English title: "A Poke in the Eye," it was called, by "Sue Denim." This was evidently a translation pirated from the piece in REM:8 that had caused a certain amount of trouble. Buried in that piece, I knew, were some unflattering remarks about the bilingual abilities of one Takayuki Tatsumi, a regular

columnist for HAYAKAWA SF, and a professional translator in Japan. Had they republished these comments just to embarrass Takayuki in his homeland? The answer, so far as I could tell, seemed to be "yes." But wasn't he a friend of theirs? That answer seemed to be "yes," also.

This was getting more and more inscrutable. Who had done the actual translation, anyway? Somewhat reluctantly, Ryohel named the culprit as Mikuru Abo. And who was he? Co-editor of the "Japanese REM." And he was the one who called himself "The Japanese Charles Platt." But no, he wasn't at the party.

By pure chance, however, I finally caught up with him in John Clute's living room, ten days later. A young, amiable, round-faced fellow who had translated books such as Barrington Bayley's *Collision Course* into Japanese, he was quite happy to admit his literary theft from REM, but his motives remained opaque to me. On one level, it seemed there was an intensely sociable, friendly ambience among co-workers on HAYAKAWA SF, but at the same time, they all seemed to be at each other's throats—while denying it with open smiles. Social complexities in British and American science fiction began to seem trivial by comparison.

Mikuru was eager to take my picture, but I figured that if he had stolen an item from my little magazine for purposes that I considered mischievous at best, there was no telling what he could do with a photograph of me; so I refused. He obediently set his camera aside, but I noticed he had slyly left the electronic flash fully charged and the film advanced to a new frame, ready to snap me the moment I dropped my guard. In self-defense, I pulled my sweater up over my head for the remainder of our conversation. He finally settled for a couple of pictures of me in this mode but rather wasted his efforts by forgetting to take his camera with him when he left. Since he and Ryohel were heading back to Japan in a matter of hours, I left it to John Clute to process the film.

I remain puzzled as to why anyone would want to call himself "The Japanese Charles Platt." If any Japanese readers can shed light on this vital topic, please let me know (preferably in English).

Even More Trivia

All that remains, here, is to round up the remainder of my miscellaneous notes, culled from the interesting variety of panels and the meager selection of room parties at the convention. In special order:

Robert Holdstock says he's finished his first novel since *Mythago Wood*. It took him two-and-a-half years.

Richard Cowper, on a panel, argued strenuously against modern technology, and genetic manipulation in particular, but lamented that a writer has little clout. "My only political influence is my subscription to Greenpeace," he said.

William Gibson has delivered the first draft of his script for *Alien III*. Production is scheduled to begin in February 1988. He was told that, the way he wrote it, the script will cost \$70 million to produce, which may or may not be feasible. Alan Dean Foster is expected to write the inevitable novelization.

On a panel, harassed by Kim Stanley

Robinson regarding the impracticality of reprogramming one's brain via a socket in the neck, Gibson said his use of this gimmick in *Neuromancer* was "only a metaphor."

Christopher Priest was selling a thick pamphlet definitively proving that Ellison's *Last Dangerous Visions* would be impossible to publish economically, even if the introductions were written and the manuscript was delivered to the publisher.

Meanwhile, more than one source reported to me that Ellison recently asked three different authors to submit new work to the collection.

Greg Bear plans an eventual sequel to *Eon* and was unrepentant when I complained that his new novel, *The Forge of God*, has a structure and theme that have become altogether familiar to science-fiction readers. "There are many good science-fiction ideas that I want to do because I don't think anyone else has done them right," he explained.

Walter Jon Williams mentioned that critics of *Hardwired* should realize it was sold on the basis of a portion and outline some months before the publication of *Neuromancer*. More and more, cyberpunk seems to me to be an idea that was waiting to happen, in the minds of many disparate writers. Williams' next novel, *Angel Station*, describes two teenagers who try to make money out of an alien-contact experience. Sounds like Whitley Streiber.

Frederik Pohl's *Chernobyl* (a semi-novel that I recommend very highly) was conceived in response to a suggestion from Ian Ballantine. I think it's a definitive book in several areas: the specific Chernobyl accident, nuclear power in general, and modern life in the Soviet Union.

Ian Watson's wife was wearing a CIA button. "It stands for Committee for Independence from Americans," she explained brightly. She also showed me her red flag emblazoned with a picture of Lenin. Watson himself achieved a first that will long be remembered in convention history: he rented a SFWA party-suite that had no toilet. In the end, desperate guests were allowed into a room across the hall.

Hugo Gernsback, namesake of the Awards, was described by toastingmaster Peter Nicholls as "one of the worst writers who ever graced our field." Nicholls did not rate Gernsback as an editor, however.

Receiving his Hugo award, Brian Aldiss pondered for a moment, then addressed the audience: "It's a long time since you gave me one of these, you bastards." He paused. "Sorry, I meant to say, 'I'm speechless,'" he added with a grin.

Some people suggested a new category that Bridge Publications could sponsor in the costume contest: "Best L. Ron Hubbard Lookalike." Sounds a winner to me.

Ramsey Campbell has agreed to serve as British judge for Writers of the Future. As of the end of the convention, he had not yet resigned.

On my last night in England, I dreamed that the spirit of Philip K. Dick had been reincarnated in the brain of Fred Harris—the "new prophet." Fred's efforts in science fiction on behalf of L. Ron Hubbard seemed to start shortly after Phil's death, so the timing certainly works out right. As a vision, however, I can't help feeling it lacks something. ■

INTERVIEW



Photo: Jay Jay Klein

H A L C L E M E N T

Conducted by Tim Fitzgibbons

Hal Clement is the name used by well-known SF author Harry Clement Stubbs. He is best known for his meticulously planned hard SF backgrounds in such novels as *Needle*, *Mission of Gravity*, *Close to*

Critical, *Star Light*, *Ice World*, *Cycle of Fire*, *Natives of Space*, *The Nitrogen Fix*, and his most recent novel, *Still River*.

Harry Stubbs is recently retired as a science teacher, and is well known to attendees of various East Coast SF conventions, and also does SF art under the name George Richard.

THRUST: Any discussion of Hal Clement and science fiction has to involve three people: Harry Stubbs, Hal Clement, and George Richard. Could you tell us a little about each?

CLEMENT: Well, Harry Stubbs is the one whose name is on the credit cards and the birth certificate. So he's been around the longest. And it's the name attached to my salary checks here at Milton Academy. So if there's such a thing as a real name, that's it. The other two were names of convenience taken much later. Hal Clement I took as a writing name because when I sold my first story I was still an undergraduate at Harvard, and had written a couple of articles for SKY AND TELESCOPE magazine. Actually it was THE SKY, before it merged with THE TELESCOPE. But it was published at Harvard Observatory anyway, and I was a little leery about how the officials would react to the same name in their dignified, slick, astronomical publication, and in a pulp. By the time I discovered that my faculty adviser, Donald Menzel, and observatory director Harlow Shapley had both tried writing science fiction themselves and wouldn't have minded in the least, I'd sold a couple of Hal Clement stories and the name was worth some money. So, I kept it. The other one was very much later. In the early '70s I'd gotten tired of weeping over astronomical art such as Chesley Bonestell paintings which were being shown at science fiction shows and which I couldn't afford. I finally went out and bought some paints and tried producing some of my own, discovered that it wasn't all that difficult, tried selling the stuff at conventions. I wanted to find out whether people would buy it because they liked it, or just because it was by Hal Clement. So, for a couple of years, I carefully kept secret who George Richard was. Finally that secret came out as well. A few years ago, I was three guests of honor at once at a convention.

THRUST: You've always been known as a scientifically-oriented writer, and this trait goes back quite a way, I gather. There's a story about a Buck Rogers comic strip. Is that true or apocryphal?

CLEMENT: That's about it. I can remember seeing a Buck Rogers panel which I am now pretty sure was printed toward the end of February 1930, which would be shortly before my eighth birthday. It has somebody waving at a spaceship with the kidnapped girl in it, and screaming, "They're heading for Mars, 47 million miles away. It'll take them 20 days to get there, even if they go 100,000 miles per hour." Well, in 1930, these numbers were a little startling to an 8-year-old and I asked my father about them. He, bless his heart, didn't know. He had never gone to college and was an accountant by trade. But he took me down to the local public library, and I came back with a book on astronomy under one arm, and Jules Verne's *Trp to the Moon* under the other and have never separated the two very effectively in the intervening years.

THRUST: You mentioned that your first story, "Proof," was written at Harvard. How did you come to start writing?

CLEMENT: Well, I was reading the stuff in the magazines from the early '30s on. I began

telling the stories to friends on the playground and then around Boy Scout campsites, originally as they were written, and then occasionally I couldn't restrain myself from fixing some of the science that went astray in them. From that it was a step to doing my own writing.

THRUST: You sold to John Campbell a lot, and "Technical Error" shows a lot of Campbell's influence with the magnetostriiction and all, but your other work seems definitely your own. How much input did he have on your stories?

CLEMENT: That's very hard to say. "Technical Error" was one where several of the specific ideas were from John Campbell. I can't remember exactly all the dates involved, but they came in a personal conversation the first time I met him, which must have been late '42 or early '43. It was before I went overseas, and probably before I went into the Army. Since that was just after I graduated from college, I guess I was still a senior at the time I met him.

THRUST: What did you think of him as an editor?

CLEMENT: He was unquestionably an extremely competent editor. He knew what he was doing. He had strong opinions. Fortunately for the magazine, they were opinions which tended to sell magazines, and he was in a position to put them into effect. I did not always agree with him scientifically, as many others did not. But that was alright. I was never entirely sure in any given case when he was seriously smitten with an idea and when he was merely trying to get an argument going. I guess there's no question that he really did fall for a lot of the rather weird stuff that he's been accused of falling for, but at the same time he was always willing to throw a bomb or two to get what might be story ideas raked out of the debris.

THRUST: After writing a few short stories, you went about creating environments, probably the best anyone has ever done. How did you go about doing it?

CLEMENT: My own technique is generally to start with some oddball astronomical object, something I've run into either in a technical journal or quite often in a more everyday one like SKY AND TELESCOPE or ASTRONOMY. Whenever I hear about the strange object, I will try to figure out what the situation would be for planets at various distances in the neighborhood of that object. Nowadays you have to figure out not only what they would be like now but what they would have been like in the past, in that object's earlier history. And the mere fact of doing it generally gives rise to a good many possible story ideas.

THRUST: Do you have to know much science in order to do this, or would a good college text suffice to give you the basic laws and things?

CLEMENT: The knowledge certainly helps. You can always get the formulae out of a text. When you're doing that, if you don't really understand the formulae, then what happens to so many youngsters on college physics and chemistry tests—when they memorize 40 or 50 different formulae but are not quite sure which is the right one for the occasion and so occasionally make themselves look a little silly—might happen to you. It's much better if

you know the field. And, if you don't, while the textbook certainly has its value as a source of ideas, you'd be well advised to discuss the story outline with someone who does know the field before you commit yourself too far.

THRUST: Then you write out your index cards?

CLEMENT: Yes. As I do the calculating—and I frequently do for quite a long time thereafter—any idea which crops up for a peculiar happening that might result from this odd environment, or which might occur simply because people are there, or because people wouldn't be expecting this thing to be happening, goes down on an index card. And when the pile of index cards gets thick enough, I can start dealing them out on a table, or on the living room floor if a table isn't big enough, and start trying to put them into some reasonable chronological order. Eventually it meets the definition of a plot.

THRUST: Is that how you get such a consistent feel for the background of the story?

CLEMENT: I suppose. Actually, by the time I've done the computing I have a pretty clear picture of the background anyway. Much of it may never appear specifically in the story, but since it's part of what I'm thinking, it is there implicitly and at least has the advantage of cutting down the number of howling inconsistencies I might otherwise make.

THRUST: Do you use the index cards for your short work, too?

CLEMENT: For anything, yes. Actually, I haven't done many short stories lately.

THRUST: "Seasoning" was the last, wasn't it?

CLEMENT: "Seasoning" was about the last. That was done ... well, sort of by request. It was a byproduct of the whole "Medea" project, where everybody who had anything to do with cooking up that system was invited to submit a story.

THRUST: Is *Mission of Gravity* still your favorite novel?

CLEMENT: Yes. Although, I finished one two weeks ago [Still River] which may or may not turn out to be better. I'll see. I like it. I did fairly well with it. The story isn't too much less believable, I suppose. It resulted from one of the world-building panels I frequently get stuck on at science-fiction conventions. This was one at Noreascon a few years ago in Boston, and I expressed my emphatic doubts about hollow planets of the Edgar Rice Burroughs Pellicular variety on the grounds that A) they would collapse under their own gravity and B) I didn't see how they could form in the first place. Lester del Rey, who is a great fellow, but very fond of arguing and like me is apt to take exception to any firm statement, seemed to have been stimulated by this remark, and a few weeks later I got a letter from Lester suggesting a way in which a hollow world might naturally form. In the intervening years, I made a number of efforts to shoot down this theory of Lester's and I never completely succeeded. It calls for a rather improbable series of events, but not an impossible one. I did a good deal of computing about the loading at the center of hollow bodies of various inner and outer radii and density, and reached the conclusion that

hollow worlds of rather larger dimensions than I formerly believed possible might last for a while. So, between calculations and Lester's procedure, I admitted that I'd lost the argument and wound up signing a contract with Lester for a hollow world novel which has now been finished and is in his hands.

THRUST: Is it a complex mechanism?

CLEMENT: Essentially, it was a combination ice world and a silicate world—ice world like Pluto and silicate world like our own—with the materials accreting all in one body instead of several others, and eventually you had this solid object with an ice core. One of the low probabilities is, of course, the silicate dust accumulating without evaporating the ice on the spot. But I figured that there were ways in which, once you get a modest-sized silicate shell and an atmosphere, you could bring in your remaining silicate particles, slow them in the atmosphere, radiate off the kinetic energy and have them settle down at fairly low temperatures. Intermediate melting of various other ice bodies which had accumulated would melt the whole thing, have a lot of local geochemistry with water and ammonia go on, and have what amounted to a sedimentary shell sitting around the ice body, which was eventually evaporated by radioactive heating in the silicates. As I say, it's a rather low probability concatenation of events, but doesn't seem to be a quite impossible one.

THRUST: Is this a "game" novel, following the theory you advanced in "Whirligig World"?

CLEMENT: Yes. Actually, my characters don't discover that the place is hollow until chapter 16 or 17 out of 20. But the implications are there, low-density and whatnot. They are graduate students who have been stuck on the place to solve a minor lab problem. The world has been used by the local college as a lab exercise for years. The students are supposed to figure out why it's got such a dense atmosphere when it's got such a low mass and escape velocity. Even the college doesn't know it's hollow. This is a surprising set of events for everybody concerned.

THRUST: In an essay on the creation of alien beings, you say science-fiction readers should say, "Of course" when they see the resolution of the problem...

CLEMENT: And then when you say, "Of course," you immediately start figuring out ways in which the "of course" wouldn't be true so you have a new story.

THRUST: Is this the "purest" form of science fiction, the problem story?

CLEMENT: Well, this is my personal view of the purest form of science fiction. It's closely analogous to the detective story. In both cases the plot is essentially a problem, and in both cases the reader is supposed to have a fair chance of solving the problem before being presented with the solution.

THRUST: Which authors influenced you the most and which do you particularly like now?

CLEMENT: It's very hard to say. John Campbell, of course, did a good deal. The old space-opera types—Jack Williamson and Doc Smith—I read a lot when I was young, I still re-read, and I still wish I could emulate their storytelling skills. And people like Poul Anderson, who is certainly a rival on the

hard-science side, I envy the abilities of quite a bit.

THRUST: You seemed to praise Robert Forward's novels a lot.

CLEMENT: I liked the two I have read so far. I believe there is a sequel to *Dragon's Egg* which I haven't seen yet, and which I badly want to get.

THRUST: Fred Pohl once said something to the effect that you possess a tremendous competitive advantage over the majority of your colleagues: You understand what the scientists are talking about.

CLEMENT: This is true certainly for many SF writers. Whether it's a majority, I'm not sure these days.

THRUST: Anyhow, you wrote a lot for Pohl in the '60s...

CLEMENT: For a while, he edited *GALAXY* and *IF* magazines. He had an interesting habit of buying paintings he liked for the covers and then commissioning stories to go with the paintings. I did that for him five times or so.

THRUST: That's how you wrote *Ocean on Top*, isn't it?

CLEMENT: *Ocean on Top* was one of those.

THRUST: Going back to defining science fiction: "A Question of Guilt" was good, but is it science fiction?

CLEMENT: Well, it's closer to science fiction than it was originally expected to be. I was approached by a gentleman who wanted to do an anthology of vampire stories and even though it is a vampire story, I think it is still science fiction.

THRUST: Your characters exhibit a high degree of rationality, unusual in view of most people's typical behavior.

CLEMENT: Well, they're aliens!

THRUST: Is it fair to pick out this characteristic of your work, and if so, why is it there?

CLEMENT: Well, I have more trouble than most good writers making my characters act in a way I couldn't bring myself to. I'm merely lucky if you think that line of action is rational.

THRUST: It seems a favorite theme of yours is first contacts.

CLEMENT: Well, not always first contacts, but contact of people with different viewpoints, people who are having trouble understanding each others' viewpoints. The first contact part is less important than the difference. I'm very consciously looking for different viewpoints when I'm writing.

THRUST: You wrote a historical novel, *Left of Africa*. Was it tougher or easier to write than science fiction?

CLEMENT: The research was harder, because I didn't know that much history. I had to poke around a bit and find out about when things happened and under what circumstances these things could have happened. I'm still not entirely sure how right I was. Some historian might be able to jump on some glaring inconsistencies, though if any have they haven't called it to my attention. The writing part was neither more nor less

difficult than any other.

THRUST: You were science editor for *GALILEO* and *UNEARTH* for a while....

CLEMENT: For a while. Actually I didn't edit very much. I was asked to pass on the scientific validity of a story occasionally, was about all.

THRUST: Is that where they had the *GALILEO*'s world project?

CLEMENT: Yes. That's being revived now by the same editor, Charles Ryan, in another magazine, *ABORIGINAL SF*. We're using the same project, though we're calling it, of course, by another name.

THRUST: Should we be holding our breath waiting for new short stories by you?

CLEMENT: That happens only when I get an idea and find it convenient. Writing is still a spare-time activity. I have about a year and a half to go before I retire as a teacher.

THRUST: Have you ever wanted to write a science-fiction story in which one of our natural laws--say, the Second Law of Thermodynamics--was different?

CLEMENT: I've never given that one any great amount of thought, no. I'd be willing to think it over and decide whether I could bring myself to believe in it enough to do something about it.

THRUST: Or maybe change the gravity constant?

CLEMENT: Well, that's minor. Though the consequences might not be so minor.

THRUST: Which of the sciences offers the best area for speculation right now?

CLEMENT: Well, for wide open stuff I suppose cosmology and astrophysics are the ones. Although plain brute physics is doing some pretty funny stuff these days.

THRUST: Thank you, Hal Clement. ■

interzone

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

continues to grow. The magazine now has full-colour covers, more pages and more non-fiction features. Each issue also has a fine selection of sf and fantasy stories by new and established writers. *Interzone* is "the best new science fiction magazine in 20 years" — *Washington Post*. "No other magazine in Britain is publishing science fiction at all, let alone fiction of this quality" — *Times Literary Supplement*.

INTERZONE 22, Winter 1987/88, contains:

David S. Garnett: *The Only One*

J.G. Ballard: *Interview by David Pringle*

Cherry Wilder: *The Decline of Sunshine*

Charles Stross: *The Boys*

K.W. Jeter: *Interview by Les Escott*

Lisa Tuttle: *Memories of the Body*

Christopher Burns: *Among the Wounded*

SMS: *The Good Robot*

Eric Brown: *The Girl Who Died for Art, and Lived*

INTERZONE 23, Spring 1988, will contain:

David Brin: *The Giving Plague*

Greg Egan: *Scatter My Ashes*

Christopher Evans: *Artefacts*

Paul J. McAuley: *Karl and the Ogre*

Kim Newman: *Famous Monsters*

Alex Stewart: *Animator*

plus an interview with a leading writer, film reviews, book reviews and more

For a four-issue subscription in the United Kingdom send £7.50 to 124 Osborne Road, Brighton BN1 6L U. Please make cheques or postal orders payable to *INTERZONE*. Overseas subscribers send £8.50 by International Money Order. American subscribers may pay by dollar cheque: please send \$13 (or \$16 if you want delivery by air mail) to our British address, above. Kindly specify which issue you want your subscription to commence with. Single copies of the magazine are £1.95 inland, £2.50 overseas (or \$4 seemail, \$5 airmail, to the USA).



Winners of the ALTERNATIVE CONVENTION PROGRAMMING Contest!

It's been a while since I announced the contest, so those of you waiting with bated breath probably fainted and hit your heads on sharp corners and are now drawing up lawsuits against me.

"What contest?" certain readers ingeniously ask. Last column I railed against the prevailing miasma we call science fiction conventions. I said they were chokingly dull for those of us not into costuming, media fan Dr. Who/Trek worship, trivia, or the same old panel topics recycled. I said that this sort of thing turns off people interested in what I called *Genre Transcendent Science Fiction*--or GTSF--which is to say, SF for adults interested in more than entertainment alone. I maintained we needed alternative conventions that not only jettisoned the *Genre SF* and *Media Fan* (or "wanker fan") baggage, but also provided fresh input from the outside world. These conventions should be information-validated, and should be operated entirely independently (in an ideal world) of the old cons. I offered as prizes signed copies of *Count Zero* and *Mirrorshades*, and a subscription to *THRUST*. We're giving those to the First Prize winner. Second Prize is a subscription plus a signed

copy of *Eclipse* by yours truly. (Is it pretentious of me to give my own book as a prize? Hey, I made it Second Prize, didn't I? Saintly humility.) Third Prize--going to a few people--is a subscription alone. Honorable mentions win...honorable mentions.

It was close for the first prize, between Edward Hall and Phillip Rose. I finally gave it to Phillip Rose--yes you, Mr. Rose, are our Grand Prize Winner (musical sting here, Vanna White makes a flourish over the prizes), because of his sheer fecundity. And the fact that he had an excellent selection of suggested participants from outside the SF community. To me, that sort of participation is the key to the revitalization of cons.

Here are the winning entries from Mr. Phillip A. Rose of S. Setauket, New York: (I added a couple of my own suggestions to two of the panel lists, in parentheses):

VIETNAM...Panelists: Joe Haldeman, Oliver Stone, Richard Nixon, Michael Herr and Stanley Kubrick.

ROCK VIDEO ESTHETICS: Meaning Without Syntax...Panelists: William Gibson, Susan Sontag, Laurie Anderson, Kate Bush, Alan Bloom, David Lynch and Fred Jameson. (And John Shirley--Shirley's adding this to

the list.)

CYBERPOLITICS: Information Tracing, Secrecy, and the End of Democracy ...

Panelists: G. Gordon Liddy, Thomas Pynchon, Oliver North, Alan Bloom, and Donna Haraway. [My additions: the editors of *The Nation* and Stewart Brand. And John Shirley.]

AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS A BOSON: Is Particle Physics Overdue for a Paradigm Shift?...Panelists: Rupert Sheldrake, Hubert

Dreyfuss, two physicists, and an SF writer. **PROSAIC MELODRAMAS: Putting Music into Space Opera...**Panelists: Susan Schwartz, Julian May, Peter Sellars, Philip Glass, Kate Bush, David Byrne, Stephen Sondheim, and Stanley Kubrick.

THE VIRGIN AND THE DYNAMO: Making Technology Sacred...Panelists: Reyner Banham, William Gibson, Kim Stanley Robinson, Thomas Pynchon, Doris Lessing, Susan Sontag, Hubert Dreyfuss and some AI goons.

NOIR: Film and Otherwise...Panelists: William Gibson, Kim Stanley Robinson, Vivian Sobchak, Brian DePalma, Frank "Dark Knight" Miller, and Bob "Flaming Carrot" Burden.

MAKE IT SCREAM

John Shirley

Second Prize goes to Edward Hall of Atlanta, Georgia, who submitted: **The PC May Be My Friend, But Will It Make Cut-Up Any Easier?** A panel on the impact of new technologies upon experimental writing and new writerly modes of expression, featuring Thomas (Amnesia) Disch, Marvin (The Society of Mind) Minsky, Kathy (Don Quixote) Acker, Ray (inventor of a reading machine for the blind) Kurzweil, and moderator Anthony Burgess.

AIDS and the Next Century: A panel on how the AIDS epidemic may alter our world. Featuring: Samuel R. Delany, Alvin Toffler, William F. Buckley, Walter Sullivan, David (the National Association for the Advancement of White People) Duke, and moderator Mathilde (the American AIDS Foundation) Krim.

The Futurist Designers Look Back: Sid (Bladerunner) Mead, Bernardo (Miami's Arquitectonica firm) Fort Brescia, and Luigi (lots of neat stuff) Colani tell how their childhoods were different from yours and mine, and how it affects the can opener of tomorrow.

Stuart Gordon is a Very Funny Fellow:

Presentation of the iconoclast filmmaker's iconoclastic Lovecraft adaptations **Reanimator** and **From Beyond**, while Rudy Rucker tries to calculate just how quickly old H.P. is spinning in his grave.

A Marriage of True Minds At Last: A panel on REAL SF comics featuring Alan (Watchmen) Moore, Elaine Lea and Michael Kaluta, and Moebius, moderated by Carter Scholz. [To that list I-- Shirley--would add Dave Gibbons, the brilliant artist who drew **Watchmen**.]

My only argument with our Second Prize winner is the inclusion of the racist (I presume that's what he is) David Duke. I think we need people from the right, but not lunatics--not this kind of asshole lunatic. I don't think we need give them a forum. I understand why you included them though: to give the thing the energy of high controversy. But with Duke involved, I'm afraid it would very rapidly deteriorate into argument, i.e., everyone in the room arguing with Duke. Giving guys like this a forum is an insult to the memory of the six million murdered by the Nazis. (I don't mean that personally, Edward. I understand what you were trying to do.)

Hall's **The Futurist Designers Look Back**

is probably my favorite entry. Here is a genuine point of intersection between future-seeing SF people and future-seeing people outside the field. This direction has wide-ranging implications. It's rich with potential insight.

Third Prize goes to several people, including David Pettus of Loretto, Tennessee:

Censorship and Intellectual Freedom: "...there's an emerging trend toward censorship, and it's impacting on our schools, libraries and bookstores. It just isn't **Uncle Tom's Cabin** that's being taken off the shelves these days. Books like **Slaughterhouse Five** and even **Fahrenheit 451**, a book ABOUT censorship, are being labeled objectionable by some fanatic factions. Should fandom be a politically active body? Do we feel strongly enough about censorship to begin a serious fight for intellectual freedom? I think programming of this kind would go a long way toward raising 'consciousness.' Contact your local ACLU, and I'm sure you'll be surprised to learn just how many attempts at censorship are underway in your own home state. Fandom thinks of itself as being organized, but hell, all they're doing is drinking beer and watching

old movies...if some people feel the need to organize against free press, then we should feel the need to stop them. Now. Before it's too damn late."

True. And Mr. Pettus also suggested: Science Fiction as Philosophical Inquiry: "In the early days, SF was more 'thought experiment.' SF has changed and developed over the years, but it is still a philosophical literature. What is man's place in the cosmos? So much has been made of SF's technological predictions over the years but what has been said about its real contributions to social and philosophical thinking?"

John Barnes of Missoula, Montana also wins Third Prize with: "Contact consulates or embassies and see if we can get whatever the Soviet or Japanese or Latin American equivalent of USIA lecturers are, to talk about where they see the world going."

And: "A lot of [Libertarians] are spouting the only political philosophy they've ever encountered, and have no idea that anyone has ever refuted any of their arguments. How about a panel of philosophers (or university profs of philosophy, which is not the same thing, but about as close as we're likely to get) laying out the basic critiques? Say, a jesuit, a structuralist Marxist, a Freudian psychanalyst, maybe a syndicalist or a Frankfurt School Marxist?"

And also: "Get a good improvisational band interested in creating the music that fits [a special scenario arranged ahead of time]. Maybe if you can talk a choreographer into it, have him create and teach a couple of steps to fit that. Why not create a live-in scenario, instead of the usual gathering of social misfits in an unstructured social setting?"

I was delighted to receive an entry from Grant Fjernedal, the author of *The Tomorrow Makers*. This is a nonfiction book about today's most adventurous cutting-edge scientists (nanotechnologists; people working to download a human mind into a computer; and more), published by MacMillan. I highly recommend it. Grant wins a subscription by suggesting: "Loving Spoonsfuls: a diplomatic programming note would probably read something like this: A panel of pros and fans read brief passages from their favorite books (needn't be SF, and the writer can't read his own work). The idea is to find passages that are so fraught with truth and beauty that the intelligent listener will be compelled to track down the source for more..." Grant also submits: "LSD Retrospectives: People talking about their finest and most exhilarating/frightening, hallucinogenic experiences."

Steve Roby suggests we discuss the SF/rock connection, "SF music? Don't give me heavy metal of '60s retreats, give me Minisyn, Cocteau Twins, early Ultravox...Instead of music that features a bit of SF in the lyrics (and destroy all filksongs!)"

Steve Roby gets a subscription just because he said "Destroy all filksongs!" Yeah!

Honorable mentions:

Kay Pealstrom suggests a panel on "Clichés—How Everyone Else Has Said What You're Trying To Say...and Possibly Better." [That would clear the air. Anything to scrape off the deeply encrusted barnacles of SF triteness so we can get this vessel moving.]

J.B. Neumann offers: "Technology Expos. Get Team Xerox to demonstrate their latest in computer graphics, or maybe some robotics or aerospace firm would like to demonstrate

their wares to the public." [This sounds like it would have been tried. If it hasn't, it should be.]

He also suggests: "Large, ugly bouncers stationed at strategic points with or/ers to beat the living shit out of anybody with a lightsaber or a T-shirt that says, 'The Ghu It's Friday! Yes, I'm serious.' J.S.U.S."

Ah, J.B., you warn the cockles of me heart. But I'd better reassure Mr. Gerry Uba, who wrote in to urge that we need: "...tolerance, patience and generosity—what used to be called good manners—yes, fannish etiquette." Mr. Neumann may be "serious" about beating the living shit out of these human clichés, but not I. Still, I don't see why I have to be polite to them, particularly. They're "smoking" in a non-smoking section. "Smoking" culturally. They make my choke. But I wouldn't whup 'em. Probably wouldn't throw them out or jeer at them. I just wouldn't encourage their attendance. I think we need some points of order for discussion, but I don't think we need more tolerance or politeness. We have too much caution (read game-playing) as it is. Mr. Uba, have you ever read Marcuse's *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*? I recommend it in this connection.

Mr. Uba offers some programming notions of value: "This is art? The Iconography of the SF Book Cover" [An exploration and excoriation of image clichés.] He also suggests a writing contest, in the nonfiction realm: "...commentary of less than 500 words on any single work of the con's GOH." At least this would generate some critical thinking amongst the con hoi polloi.

Scott Green suggests: "New technology, new politics: a discussion on how the political process reacts to new technology." Good. Very relevant to the near future global situation, I should think.

Joe Shea offers: "Partycon—would have a number of bands (thrash to Zydeco), performance artists, poets, etc., doing their respective things with an open bar in the background. Three days and three nights of this. This sounds like a SubGenius Revival, Joe. (I'll describe SubGenius Site in next column. In the meantime, if you want to know what it is—and if you knew what it is, you'd know why you should know what it is—buy a copy of the Simon & Schuster trade paperback edition of *The Book of the SubGenius*.) This is some people's idea of hell and my idea of heaven, albeit a tiring one.

Alan D. Burrows of Mississauga, Ontario submits: "Geopolitics and the Nation State: Is there a Future in it?—alternatives to countries"—which isn't bad, and also (I rather like this one): "Consensual Reality: Can We Do Without It?—The role of common frames of reference in human thought and how 'common' it really is." Mr. Alan D. Burrows also told me "Fuck you." That is, he wrote: "Dear Shirley" and then drew a hand giving me the Finger. After which he wrote: "Further, your reference to 'Genre Transcendent Science Fiction' is a redundancy. What you are describing is art...it transcends all genres. Undoubtedly you'd find adult treatments of adult concerns in detective fiction, gothic horrors [etc.]...I do not believe the literary [sic] qualities, art, depends on the qualities of the genre, if any, in which it appears. Your description of an alternative convention reminds me very much of a university education. The rest of your article is cynicism,

jingoism, and puffery. I'd like that signed Gibson novel, however, so here's some prostitution."

Hey, what a charmer. Insults me, acts as if there's nothing to the alternate con concept, then gives me five entries. Kind of hypocritical. Kind of greedy.

As jingoism is excessively aggressive patriotism or nationalism, I assume you are using the word loosely (very loosely, inaccurately, in fact) to mean elitism or a simple dislike of people different than myself.

It isn't true. All I want, Mr. Burrows, Mr. Edgar Rice Burrows, is a forum that focuses on A) quality science fiction and B) interaction with people outside the field with relevant ideas and C) unusual media input and D) a cure for the smothering dismal oppressive boredom of conventions as they are now. (This reply goes to Mr. Jennings, too. He knows who he is.) I do not wish to eliminate conventions as they exist. I wish to create an alternative for interested persons. Conventional conventions will go on as always with costuming filksinging, etc. But those of us who wish to interact on another level won't have to attend them any more. (Oh yes, we had to attend them before, if we wanted to meet other writers, other people into SF, in one place. It was the most expeditious way.) We can attend the alternative. And then people who are into conventional conventions will do what they like at theirs, and we'll do what we like at ours. I feel that the way to see that this really happens is to organize conventions with virtually none of the people who were involved in the other sort, and advertise them in different places. Not wanting to be subjected to a bombardment of juvenile irrelevancies is hardly elitism. It's personal taste, something I--and other people in pursuit of GTSF--have a right to.

Also, I feel that people who would otherwise become involved in the SF field are being driven away when they attend cons and see what they're like. I know this for a fact, having heard it many times. And I mean creative, intelligent, valuable people. They're not snobs. They're just adults.

As for it being like a university education, well, if it is that way here and there--so what? An infusion of that sort of information template at cons is welcome. And be reassured that there will be too many rogue elements for it to be really just a variation of university dialogue. If we do as I suggest, it'll be too cross-fertilized to be dull academic stuff. Indeed, some of it will make your hair stand on end.

I really don't see the relevancy of your remarks about GTSF being another term for "artistic SF." Maybe, maybe not. But if it is, so what? Yes, I'm trying to focus on artistic SF. Right. There isn't enough of that kind of focus. What of it? It's you who're being redundant here.

That's all I have to say to Mr. Burrows, except, of course: Fuck YOU, asshole.

To be fair, I did say "Fuck off" to Certain Fans in my last column, and I assume Mr. Burrows' "fuck you" is a reaction to that. By "fuck off," I mean, "go away." It's a street slang usage. I didn't mean it like "fuck you." Okay? But I suppose "fuck off" in itself is unnecessarily rude. So if you were offended by it, go back to my last column and cross out "fuck off" and replace it with "I wonder if you would be so kind as to excuse us, we wish to have a few words in private."

I was going to outline more of my own ideas with respect to convention programming, but I'm running out of room and I still have to reply to some people. I'll go into this in my next column, along with my revelations about *Matters SubGenius*, as these are related areas.

I was, in general, disappointed with the quality of the suggestions I got. Most of them were either utterly unoriginal or namby-pamby. There were a lot of variations on old themes. Just a slight twist. Instead of planet building, starship building. Big deal. Instead of "what are aliens like," I get "are aliens moral." Gosh. Seventy percent of the entries were things I've seen on convention programming pamphlets. Am I the only one who reads these things?

Not only that, but most people seemed unable to grasp the idea that the alternative con should have nothing to do with the old ones. Ideally there would be at least eighty percent new people in the programming. People who've had no involvement in the SF field. We've talked to each other long enough. Let's cut back on it. Let's talk to other people. I was also hoping for a more radical vision of the convention environment. Bring in the artists who specialize in creating art environments to create stimulating surround-sculptures. (We pay for this with grants and other art-funding devices.) High profile video input (I don't mean rock video, particularly, I mean video art)...bring in the editors of *RESEARCH* and *RATTLER MAGAZINE*'s punk poets to recite...or people like Gary Indiana, Jayne Anne Phillips, Jim Carroll...how about Lydia Lunch and friends...ha ha, Lydia's sing the hair off your balls...performances by Nash the Slash...Chris Burden...Stelarc...The idea is to bring in people from the cutting edge of the other arts, people who're forward looking, who're by their very nature futuristic, people who--just by being there--would create a sort of carnival of diverse visions that would be in itself a scene out of the fantastic.

No time to go into it more now, got to get to:

Michael Gilbert, who has been involved in Norwescon programming, sent me the program for a con within a con called Alternacon, which constituted a good beginning. I still maintain that you can't have really refreshing non-boring cons without completely abandoning the old structure and starting anew. Cons like SerCon and ReaderCon and Alternacon, while well-meaning, keep too much of the old baggage and--here's the main problem--don't involve people from outside the field. Talking to ourselves again.

Still, Alternacon provided some interesting jump-off points in programming: "The Aesthetics of Science in SF: SF can use science and technology as metaphor to be manipulated as a rich source of imagery." And: "Will Bugs Kill Us Before the Bomb?" An aerosol test facility for bacteriological warfare agents is being built in Utah. It is impossible to separate defensive from offensive biological weapons research." And: "Altered Harvest: The Future of Food: Will environmental safety, nutritional quality and biological diversity be sacrificed to expediency and profit?" And: "Crypto-Fascist Propaganda: Technocratic elitism, militarism, racism and sexism are arguably rampant in modern SF." And: "Genre Categorization: What are the

implications of the critical nature of genres for readers and critics?" And: "Karl Marx: 19th Century Hari Seldon?" Marxism is a theory explaining the mechanisms and forces of modern history. How are these theoretical tools useful in the plotting of future histories?

Some self-explanatory titles from Alternacon:

"Sympathetic Versus Unsympathetic Characters;" "The Popularity of Imperialism;" "The Meaning and Nature of Progress;" "The Social Responsibility of Writers;" "Alternative Childraising Methods;" "Imagining a More Democratic Future" and: "Science and Social Responsibility."

You'll notice the emphasis, in the preceding list, on challenging limits. Gilbert's topics challenge the limits of what is "safe" for discussion. He's applying SF themes to the real world, challenging us to look at our own lives and our own futures through the lens of SF thinking. He's not afraid of some very controversial political themes. It's a good beginning. There's not really much in the way of participation on the part of people outside the genre, apart from a few scientists. But clearly Mike Gilbert has some refreshing programming ideas.

Ray Nelson (I believe this is R. Faraday Nelson) of El Cerrito, California, sent me a detailed plan for a modular convention or "Modcon." Nelson feels that the problem with cons is that they have grown too big, diluting the intensity of participation in any one aspect of programming. Nelson says: "If this is a serious panel, the sort that might be termed 'genre transcendent,' the audience may well be outnumbered by the panelists...almost invariably, the first panelist begins by staring blankly into space for a moment, then saying, 'I don't really know what I'm doing here.' Man, you got THAT one right, Ray!

Nelson goes on to suggest that since the basic convention module is a hotel activity room, why not change the nature of the mod, and substitute a room in a private home. Instead of four ill-chosen panelists, substitute a cassette tape of one or more well-chosen and well-prepared speakers. Follow the playing of the tape, says Nelson, with a roundtable discussion led by the Module Moderator or Modmod. There are advantages in flexibility; a modcon can be held in one or more private homes; the various mods can be located in different cities if they like. "Modcon goers would all experience the convention as a little group of friends, just like in the old days," yet would hear speakers who were major authors, thinkers, celebrities. "...not just a random sample of whoever was available, speaking on anything the con committee could think of." Nelson points out that another obvious advantage is price. A further advantage is social. Since it's small, you can do it by invitation only, and control who comes, hence weeding out the "Dr. Who fans, goodgirl art collectors," and etc. Nelson further suggests that since censorship is growing, this would create a sanctuary for discussion beyond the reach of censors.

Nelson's idea has a certain appeal. It would at least initiate a definitive break from the old oligarchy of fan con organizers, something that's needed for a truly fresh start. Only a truly fresh start will get us out of the quicksand of ennui and redundancy that cons have become. What's the point of only climbing halfway from a quicksand pit? Those of us who'd like to organize alternative

conventions and don't yet have the money-raising systems in place could indeed start with modular cons.

But on the whole I'm afraid that Mr. Nelson's nostalgia for the good old days has blinded him to certain fundamental weaknesses in his scheme. You can't have a give and take with a cassette player. Listening to a cassette is fairly dull. A good speaker has charisma, body language, etc., to make the event sparkle. A great many speakers require a fee, which a modular con couldn't afford. A large con has many disadvantages--but if the right people are involved in an appealing, refreshing way, it can provide a massive mainline-shot of information and sheer input you just can't get at a small con. The media potential is very limited when you have the thing in someone's home. I envision the New Cons as much more multimedia than now. At a Modcon you're stuck with videotapes. Nelson's concept is very insular. I suspect it would make SF cons more--not less--resistant to input from the Great World.

But Modcons have their applications and there's no reason not to use them for special, limited projects.

Someons from Brookline, Massachusetts' "Readercon" sent me their programming booklet. Readercon, they explain, is an attempt to provide a small, intimate con where "readers' interests were the whole agenda... Let's look at two people. One comes to conventions to find people who are interested in discussing writers like Gene Wolfe. Another comes to live out a fantasy of being a mighty warrior, or a princess, or a slave girl, or a space cowboy... Do they have any compelling need to be in the same place at the same time? As time goes on, I think that more and more people on both sides of that line are going to say 'no'."

Right on. Readercon is, in my opinion, a *Genre Transcendent SF Con*. Their panels were on commercial writing versus literary writing, good books of interest to SF readers from outside the SF genre, Cyberpunk, two panels discussing Gene Wolfe's works in depth, the deceptive (and insulting, in my view) nature of SF book covers, the nature of the arts in general, and "the ideas, styles and aesthetic values that distinguish good literature."

Okay, sure, they're not exactly hard-edged, not striving for originality, not political, not controversial. But they're not the usual bustle either, and essentially I'd say this would be a good strong cocktail of intellectual stimuli. And they're coming out forthrightly against mixing sillyass fan programming with GTSF. At least, they're against it at their con. Sercon, which was held in Berkeley, was more or less like Readercon, I understand.

Alternacon, Readercon, Sercon--the very existence of these conventions underscores what I've been saying: that there is a groundswell of discontent with conventions as they are. People who care seriously about SF are getting decidedly fed up with the badly managed, unimaginatively programmed, and wildly inappropriate style of most SF conventions. I think people are both bored and disgusted. Perhaps--I'm not sure--conventional con planners can point to good attendance. In reply I'd point to the fact that, most of the time, people interested in meeting others involved in SF have no choice but to attend the embarrassments we call science fiction conventions. ■

Where Has All The Nonsense Gone?



ARDATH MAYHAR

If you want to get into a slugging match with me, just ask why I write "that nonsense." At its best, fantasy, like poetry, can distill the essence of what mankind is, why we are that way, and how our nature acts upon and reacts with our fellow beings and the world(s) around us.

It began in the dark of time, when language emerged from the mists and began to carry along its stream the tales that are history, carried from generation to generation. How many myths, predating the most ancient ones left to us, must have been lost as tribes died out, taking with them their own unique histories and mythologies?

The thing we call science fiction, far from being something entirely alien and new, is simply the freshest tributary to join that long

river. It embodies the myths of the present and even dares to hint at those that will come into being in the future. Mankind is an inspired mythmaker, using anything at all as its material. There a metaphysical streak within us that demands outlet and denies the overriding importance of hard logic.

When SF came upon the scene, decades back, it was joyful as a puppy, even when dealing with dark predictions and dire creations. It knew no limitations. Only the imaginations of its writers set its parameters, in which wonderful worlds were posited... Philip K. Dick's *Martian Time-Slip*, for instance, Leigh Brackett's Eric John Starke books. Heinlein's *The Green Hills of Earth*. And, of course, *The Demolished Man*, Bester's masterpiece.

As usually happens, that youthful exuberance settled into a more sedate pattern. Opposing trends came into being as the New Wave attempted to weld more literary techniques with SF ideas. Sociologically relevant subjects began to be considered more respectable than the old, wild speculations.

The field became "conservative," in that fences began going up, beyond which "real fiction" was not to be allowed to stray. Academic yardsticks began to be applied to imaginative literature, and sacred cows began to graze upon our heretofore open range.

This is opposed to everything the field had meant. The basis of SF has been its willingness and ability to tackle any subject from any angle that seems good to the writer. Only the quality of the storytelling should decide its success or failure, not any prejudices from those who are fast becoming arbiters of work in the field.

There are now more than a few influential people who seem to lack imagination, which should be the prime ingredient of SF. Particularly since SF became respectable enough to be taught in universities, too many editors, agents, and critics seem to suffer from this syndrome. It is the function of academia to reduce literature to a set of universally applicable formulae. The old freewheeling attitude that made SF such a challenging, rewarding, and pleasant thing to the present generation of writers is being eroded by the attempt to squeeze it into a consistent and acceptable mold.

If you read semi-academic publications like FANTASY BOOK with any regularity, you will see that many of their reviewers respond almost with shock to some of the more bizarre novels in our field. I feel strongly that if Van Vogt's *The World of Null-A* were just now being marketed, and if his name were not well known, the book would find the marketplace tough sledding. The non-Aristotelian logic might be totally unacceptable... just as any novel would be that was written from a slant that showed any hint of belief that intelligence might be racially connected.

You don't have to believe in such things in order to make a good story using them as backgrounds or pivots. That is the marvelous thing about SF. You can say that up is down and black is white, and if you could make it work fictionally, it used to be salable. I sadly fear that this is not as true as it once was.

Yet books like Delaney's *Dhaghren* or Silverberg's *The Book of Skully* have had good reviews by critics and are taken seriously in the academic community, even though they are novels that, no matter how serious their intentions, are not enjoyed by many of us.

The fun is being taken out of the field. Perhaps it is partially because we are now being studied in universities... and it is a physical truism that the act of studying a specimen alters it. While such courses may often create interest where there was none before SF came out from under academic interdict, there is a real question as to whether such benefits may outweigh the dangers.

Literary analysis is much like dissecting a frog. You get no idea at all of how the poor thing used to jump.

When we begin creating stories with academic criteria in the forefronts of our minds, it can begin killing off the genre. We have to remember that scholars come to

serious consideration of anything only after it has stood the test of time. Only after, indeed, it has become "respectable." Twenty years ago this field was considered beneath the notice of serious students of literature.

Important literary works have commanded vast readerships and changed that. Asimov and Clarke and Heinlein and Bradley have broken the barrier between SF and best-sellerdom. Yet if any of their work had been created with future academic studies in mind, it might have lacked the daring and unusual elements that made it succeed with the reading public.

Aside from such considerations, there is the fact that we live in a grim world. We can get all the bad news from everywhere immediately. That seems to be influencing writers.... We're getting to be as grim as the daily news. We're losing our nonsense, and that is tragic.

I am finding that many of the younger editors and critics seem to have very little sense of humor. I suspect that the "jokes" they laugh at are either dark humor or slapstick. Subtly witty and profound humor that gives the reader a deep chuckle is, more and more, lost on the editors who read and the critics who review books.

Books with really funny elements, like George R.R. Martin's *Tut Voyaging*, get good reviews... with no mention whatsoever of the humor. My own *Saga of Grittel Sundotha* was reviewed dead straight and level by one reader, who took it perfectly seriously. She didn't seem to understand that any book about a homely girl seven feet tall has, by definition, to be humorous. She didn't note or mention the chapter in which the heroine boils a witch in her own pot and steals her spellbook.

I can see a day coming in which we who write funny material are going to have to write a foreword, in which we tell the reader that this is a funny book: Do laugh particularly hard on pages 12 and 73 and 102. The thought makes me sad.

All too many of the books I receive through the SFWA's Circulating Book Plan turn out to be humorless, derivative, and -- I hate to admit it -- dull. Of perhaps 20 books in any given batch I am able to read three, and of those I may enjoy one. And maybe none.

The good ones are, make no mistake, getting better and better. I defy anyone to top Terry Bisson's *Talking Man*. But they are getting fewer, giving way to a flood of stories that seem mass-produced, inoffensive -- a deadly insult, in SF -- and "safe."

As our kind never progresses linearly, maybe in time the cycle will come around again. Perhaps publishing will veer away from the production and marketing of books as if they were toilet paper. Maybe a lavish universe of imagination will come again into being.

Maybe the nonsense will come back, along with the sense of wonder and the lack of inhibition as to what it is permissible to write about. Maybe politics and war and business machinations will return to the pages of newspapers and leave the pages of books free to speculate freely about ways in which we may grow better and bigger and happier and freer.

We need that imagination that enriches us and the world and our perceptions of each other. The world will be much poorer if all our inspired nonsense is lost.

THRUST

BACK ISSUES

Issue 5 (Spring 1974). Roger Zelazny, Fred Pohl, Chris Lampson, Dave Bischoff, Michael Moorcock.

Issue 6 (Spring 1977). Ted White, Doug Fratz, David Bischoff, Matt Howarth, Chris Lampson.

Issue 9 (Fall 1977). Norman Spinrad, Ted White, Chris Lampson, Charles Sheffield, Darrell Schweitzer, Ted White, Doug Fratz, Steve Stiles, Dan Steffan; David Bischoff.

Issue 10 (Spring 1978). Isaac Asimov, Kirby McCauley, Henry Morrison, Charles Sheffield, Derek Carter, Ted White, David Bischoff, Lou Stathis, Steve Miller.

Issue 11 (Fall 1978). Theodore Sturgeon, Joe Haldeman, C.J. Cherryh, Ted White, Charles Sheffield, David Bischoff, John Shirley, Lou Stathis.

Issue 12 (Summer 1979). Fred Saberhagen, Octavia Butler, Ted White, Charles Sheffield, David Bischoff, Michael Bishop, John Shirley, Jessica Salmonson, Chris Lampson, Dan Steffan.

Issue 13 (Fall 1979). David Gerrold, Alexei Panshin, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Ted White, Michael Bishop, Charles Sheffield, John Shirley, Dan Steffan, David Nalle, Steve Brown.

Issue 14 (Winter 1980). J.G. Ballard, Barry Malzberg, Ted White, Michael Bishop, Charles Sheffield, David Bischoff, John Shirley.

Issue 15 (Summer 1980). Gardner Dozois, Frank Kelly Freas, Michael Bishop, George Alec Effinger, Charles Sheffield, Dan Steffan, Ted White, David Nalle.

Issue 16 (Fall 1980). Joan D. Vinge, Michael Bishop, Ted White, David Bischoff, John Shirley, Mark McGarry, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, David Nalle.

Issue 17 (Summer 1981). Raymond Gallun, Michael Bishop, Charles Sheffield, George Alec Effinger, Lou Stathis.

Issue 18 (Spring 1982). Gregory Benford, Somtow Sucharitkul, D.G. Compton, Charles Sheffield, Rich Brown, Mike Conner, Grant Carrington, James Wilson.

Issue 19 (Spring 1983). Gene Wolfe, Thomas Disch, Gardner Dozois, Charles Sheffield, George Alec Effinger.

Issue 20 (Summer 1984). Michael Bishop, Jack Chalker, Charles D. Hornig, Terence Green, Gregory Feeley, Robert Sarella.

Issue 21 (Winter 1985). Jack Dann, Larry Niven, Ted White, Darrell Schweitzer, Doug Fratz.

Issue 22 (Summer 1985). Al Sarrantonio, Philip Jose Farmer, Alexis Gilliland, Michael Bishop, Janrae Frank, Darrell Schweitzer.

Issue 23 (Winter 1986). Ben Bova, Sharon Webb, Jane Yolen, Michael Bishop, Marvin Kaye, Darrell Schweitzer, Doug Fratz.

Issue 24 (Summer 1986). David Brin, Sterling E. Lanier, Marvin Kaye, Darrell Schweitzer, Doug Fratz, Janrae Frank, Pascal Thomas.

Issue 25 (Winter 1986). Piers Anthony, Michael Bishop, John Shirley, Charles Platt, Darrell Schweitzer, Marvin Kaye.

Issue 26 (Spring 1987). Stephen R. Donaldson, Nancy Kress, Michael Bishop, Charles Sheffield, Charles Platt, David Bischoff, Darrell Schweizer.

Issue 27 (Summer 1987). Michael Bishop, Greg Bear, Richard E. Geis, John Shirley, Gregory Benford, Marvin Kaye.

Issue 28. Lawrence Watt-Evans, Walter Tevis, Janrae Frank, Darrell Schweizer, Marvin Kaye.

Issue 29. Charles Platt, Hal Clement, John Shirley, Ardath Mayhar, Darrell Schweizer, Marvin Kaye.

Dear Thrust: Enclosed is \$ _____ for:

A four issue (1-year) subscription (\$8.00 U.S., \$10.00 foreign) starting with issue # _____.

An eight issue (2-year) subscription (\$14.00 U.S., \$18.00 foreign) starting with issue # _____.

Back issues: [15] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19] [20] [21] [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27] [28] [29] [\$2.50 each (\$2.75 foreign), or 4/\$8.00 (\$10.00 foreign) or 8/\$14.00 (\$18.00 foreign). U.S. Dollars only.]

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____



THRUST PUBLICATIONS

8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877



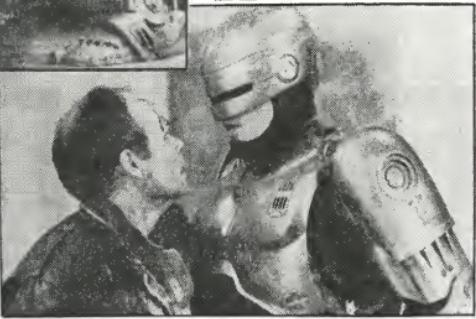


WORDS & PICTURES

movie reviews

by Darrell Schweitzer

ROBOCOP



That "Made-For-TV-Look". There's something about a made-for-TV movie that we recognize at once, but which is a lot harder to define. It isn't just a matter of cheap effects or bad acting or trivial storylines, although it can be all those things.

RoboCop (Orion Pictures) has that made-for-TV feel unmistakably, even though its effects are state-of-the-art, all the performances are at least competent, and the storyline itself is perfectly adequate. I think it's a subtle case of shallowness. That sounds like an oxymoron--you know, a self contradiction like "military intelligence" or "psychic science"--but it isn't. *RoboCop*

whizzes and bangs its way along, and even engages your sympathies, and only after some reflection does it seem shallow.

For one thing, you get the impression that all cops do is shoot the bad guys.

RoboCop takes place in the near future--near enough that the buildings and cars all look the same--in a city where the police are clearly losing the war on crime. Our hero, Officer Murphy (Peter Weller) is sadistically killed by a spectacularly brutal gang of drug-pushers. But he signed a release form when he joined the force, so that is only the metal body. His brain is transplanted into a metal body. He is not supposed to be a

man at this point, but a machine with a few organic parts. His memory is suppressed and he is being sold as the future of law-enforcement by shyster corporate types who provide such services on a commercial basis.

But of course poor Murphy begins to remember who he is, and before long he is no longer an impressive tool but a rogue cyborg hunting down the gang who did him in. He is declared a menace and himself hunted, all at the urging of another shyster who is selling a rival line of pure robots.

However, his partner (Nancy Allen) is the one person who believes in him. Showdowns and shootouts follow. Justice is done.

This is a formula story, and all the characters are one-dimensional, even the revenge-seeking cyborg (who remains pure at heart), but it does work, the way a really good comic book does. The moral tones are black and white, with little shading. Characterizations come in broad, bold strokes, but they are the right strokes. *RoboCop* appeals to the most basic emotions: hate the bad guys and love the good guys. The pain of Murphy's experience isn't glossed over. (And Weller's performance is eerily good.) We can all identify with his need to know who he was and what happened to him. This gives the film just enough humanity.

Also, it's aimed at adults, which is something of a novelty in Hollywood SF these days.

There will probably be sequels. I expect them to be less interesting now that Murphy has come to terms with being the Man of Steel who really is made of steel or some similar alloy.

Paul Verhoeven directed, and did a thoroughly professional job.

When I went to see *RoboCop* I made it an unofficial double-feature by hanging around the theater and going back in to see *Lost Boys*, all this on a \$3.00 matinee ticket.

I'm glad I did it that way, because for \$1.50, *Lost Boys* might be worth it, but for full price I would have felt gypped.

Think of it as a punk remake of *I Was a Teenaged Vampire*. Actually, a quick glance into my trusty copy of John Stanley's *The Creature Features Movie Guide* tells me there never was a vampire in the "I Was a Teenaged" series, but never mind. There could well have been.

It's a shame, because *Lost Boys* has its moments, and a genuinely neat premise.

Think of the *Lost Boys* from *Peter Pan*: they don't have to go to school. They don't grow up, they sleep all day and party all night--vampires, obviously. And they can fly. For a while this film really does explore adolescent fantasies, maybe the same ones which make vampires so fascinating. The *Lost Boys* may be horrible, but they enjoy a very alluring sort of freedom.

Unfortunately the director (Joel Schumacher), not to mention the script writers (Janice Fischer, James Jeremias, and Jeffrey Boam) lost all sense of what this movie was supposed to be. Do I know what it was supposed to be? Did I read the script and/or their minds? Well, no, but clearly they don't know either. The result is a muddled mixture of horror and kiddie comedy constantly at war with itself. If George Romero and Walt Disney had collaborated--badly, at a distance--they

result might have come out like this.

First we have a reasonably straightforward tale of a divorced mother and her two sons, one about fourteen, the other one of those middle-twenties high schoolers you only see in movies, who move into a seedy California seaside resort. Two strands of plot develop: The older brother falls in with Bad Company indeed, drinks Something Awful on a dare, and becomes a half-vampire. He won't be entirely a vampire until he kills someone, and he begins to fight against vampiric tendencies. At this point we have horror-drama about someone afflicted with a curse, struggling not to harm those close to him.

Meanwhile the younger brother meets two kids in a local comics store, a pair of Junior High Van Helsings who wear combat fatigues and call themselves the Frog Brothers. At first they give the kid certain horror comics which contain the Whole Truth, then help determine who's a vampire and who isn't. The Brady Bunch vs. Dracula.

The two strands don't mesh. Suspense evaporates amid juvenile wisecracking. The result fails both as horror and as comedy, leaving us only with a few good moments and a memorable performance by Kiefer Sutherland (remember him as the gangleader from *Stand By Me*), and a few eerie images, such as Sutherland dropping slowly from a railroad bridge into fog, his black coat gently flapping.

A much more ambitious horror effort is Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* (New World Pictures), which is getting a lot of coverage in the fantasy media and roundly panned in the mundane press. It will be inevitably compared to Stephen King's *Maximum Overdrive*, not at all in King's favor. Where King's first directorial effort was an unmitigated disaster, Barker's is at least of professional quality. He's turned in a watchable, inventive, two-star movie. Possibly his theater experience has made the difference. Maybe he simply has some talent for film. I think he will be allowed to direct again.

Barker wrote the screenplay, based on his own novella "The Hellbound Heart" (in *Night Visions* 3). He seems to have had nearly total control over every aspect of the production, and the result is a film that really does convey the exact experience of his fiction—with all its strengths and weaknesses.

The movie's slogan is "There are no limits," which might be taken as Barker's artistic credo. He has said as much in numerous interviews. He doesn't believe in holding anything back.

And, sure enough, he doesn't. This produces some amazing images, but it also robs the film of much of its impact. Nothing at all is left to the imagination, and in the horror film, what is Imagined is often far more powerful than anything actually on the screen.

Hellraiser is a not-so-charming love story about Frank, a depraved fellow who wants to explore the outer limits of sensuality, where pleasure and pain are indistinguishable. The censors cut Barker's "prize" sex scene, so it mostly seems a matter of pain. Frank opens a magic Chinese puzzle-box, summons some very punk-looking demons, and is ripped to shreds in what one newspaper critic called a record-breaking display of raw liver and chicken parts. (Well, much of it looked like egg yolk to me.)

Then the dead man's brother, and the



HELLRAISER

brother's wife move into the house. Alas, the wife has had a torrid affair with the wicked Frank, who is still in the house. He comes back from Hell, or, about a third of him does, little more than a dripping skeleton. He needs blood to become whole. So the wife starts picking up businessmen in bars, luring them home, and killing them with a hammer. Frank does the rest. Later on, he is only missing his skin, and then, and at last, he steals his brother's skin (and face), all to the dismay of his brother's daughter who must now cope with him.

There's as much gross-out in this film as in any *Friday the 13th* sequel. Barker can't resist showing us one more bit of dripping flesh or a corpse spewing maggots from its mouth. But the difference is that he pays genuine attention to story values. The plot makes sense. There are no logic lapses. The

characters are plausibly motivated. The major players (by Larry Cotton, Clare Higgins, Andy Robinson, and Ashley Lawrence) are all competent. Many of the special effects are excellent and genuinely imaginative. Barker, unlike King, knows how to frame a shot and pace a scene.

But after a while the shock effects begin to pall. They would have been far more effective if Barker had actually shown some restraint. Once he has shown us everything, there is nothing more to show. Only strong story values prevent this film from being a disaster. As it is, much is startling and a good deal is repulsive, but little is actually scary. We're jaded after the first half hour. We keep watching for the plot, not for the atmosphere, which becomes a trifle thin.

This is not a film for everyone. I went to see it with Linda Bushyager, who did not like

it. "A beautifully mounted bowl of pus is still a bowl of pus," she said.

I still think it was egg yolk.

Television

Lots of interesting things have been happening on television these past few weeks, not all of them good.

For one thing, Max Headroom has lost it. I missed the season premier, but I did see the following two episodes, and I have to stop and think to remember what they were about. (I am writing this Sunday night. I saw the show last Friday.) There was another about Network 23 being drawn into an amazingly byzantine scheme involving the sex life of a political candidate.

The directorial style has changed. There is a lot less razzmatazz, but, more seriously, the shows are not science fiction any longer. The directors and writers don't seem to know what to do with the science-fictional elements, particularly Max himself. The show is merely mundane TV about a roving reporter. The future feel is gone, for all some of the old trappings might remain.

There is a science-fictional angle to the evangelist episode. The evangelist is, of course, a crook. She is selling phoney resurrection, claiming that her church will make computer-recordings of personalities, then transplant them into bodies once resurrection technology becomes available. But it's all a scam. The suckers are being duped with mere videotapes of their loved ones.

Little imaginative use is made of this. If the church were selling, say, a phony cancer cure, the plot would have come off the same. (Besides, I bet that resurrection scam would work today. Enough people are sufficiently gullible.)

And Max has nothing to do. He chatters a bit. He gets kidnapped, but any Desired Object (or person) could have fulfilled that role.

The plotting is extremely rudimentary. The evangelist just lets Max go because Edison said she ought to be sincere. The conflict is more aborted than resolved. It's the old "Oh, never mind" ending.

In the political-scandal episode there is no technological angle at all, save that the bad guys are faking their candidate's ratings. (How do we find out about this? Bryce is ordered to find out where those ratings are coming from. So he calls up a school chum who works for the other network and she tells him. No complications. That's his only scene, by the way.)

Max is purely extraneous baggage in this one. He chatters a bit more at the end, but plays no role in the plot, not even as an object.

Our noble editor marvels (in *THRUST 28*) that with Max Headroom we now have genuine Cyberpunk SF on television, in front of millions. Alas, it's no longer cyber nor punk nor even SF, except by courtesy.

(By the way, the original British pilot for this series is available on tape—even legally, I think. It is something of a disappointment, a bit slower-paced and more drab than the American version of the same episode. The plot is the same, the ending much less dramatic. The character of Bryce is sharply different, a nasty and somewhat older

psychotic who does not switch sides and join forces with Edison Carter.

It might have seemed better if I had not seen the American version first. This is the only example I can think of where the Americans actually did something better than the British—usually it's more like comparing the American A.D. with the same scenes in *I, Claudius*.)

Star Trek: The Next Generation was rumored for months in the SF (as opposed to Hollywood) media as being "dead on arrival". Well, I am glad to report it's definitely twitching, not half as bad as I had expected, and purest *Star Trek*. The trekkies may well love it. It's the same mixture of real Science Fiction and Sci-Fi hokum that the old show was.

The cast is entirely different, and I think this was a wise move. *Mystery*, for example, is showing Lord Peter Whimsey again, but with a different actor playing Lord Peter... and it may not be fair to him to say so, but he just doesn't measure up. Similarly, if *Star Trek* had used different actors to play Kirk and Spock a McCoy, it would have been a disaster.

Instead the action takes place a few generations later. Technology is more advanced. The Klingons are on our side now, and there is even one on the crew of the new Enterprise. (And his voice sounds remarkably like Spock's—but he is very emotional.) Physics and biology are as strange as ever in the *Star Trek* universe. The Enterprise comes to something called a "dead stop" (relative to what?) in space, and there's a crew member who is half human, half "betazoid". (Verily, a Sci-Fi word if ever there was one.)

On the plus side, one basic stupidity of the original premise has been corrected. The new captain (Patrick Stewart) doesn't always beam down into danger. Instead he sends his First Officer (Jonathan Frakes) to do it for him.

The new crew includes a blind black man (LeVar Burton) who sees artificially, the aforementioned Klingon, female chief medical officer (Gates McFadden) and her son, aged about 15 (Wil Wheaton), an "android" (a humanoid robot) called Lieutenant Data (Brent Spiner) who wants to be human, and Lieutenant Troi (Marina Sirtis), the half-betazoid quasi-telepath who carries

on Gilda Radner's character Rosanne Rosannadonna as a carnival psychic. (I am hoping she will be dropped from the cast soon.) Clearly the producers are fishing with all their lines at once, and whichever combination of these characters appeals to the audience will dominate. There are relationships to be developed later. The captain had something to do with the death of the medical officer's husband. The empathic betazoid knew the First Officer way back when and there is something between them. In the first episode, Captain Picard dominates. His relationship with First Officer Riker is important. Lt. Data gets around as comic relief. The others do little, save for the betazoid, who needs to be carried off to the *Monty Python* school for overacting. The kid-character is clearly there to hook the juvenile audience. We'll see how it all comes out.

The plot of the two-hour special premier ("Encountered at Farpoint", written by D. C. Fontana and Gene Roddenberry) is routine *Star Trek*. There's another one of those pretentious demi-gods out to Judge Humanity For Its Wrongs, displaying for his own part only power without any trace of moral superiority. There's also a Secret on a painted backdrop of a planet, an alien race which looks exactly human (yet again)—this show has never been strong on exploring strange new worlds and seeking out new civilizations), and even a kind of cosmic jellyfish which Has Feelings Too. It's all very watchable, and the special effects are twenty years advanced beyond what they were the last time there was a new *Star Trek* on the tube.

But it's still the same old *Star Trek*. No real surprises.

Another premiering series, about which you will hear far less is *Friday the 13th: The Series*. This left me with a dilemma Saturday night because it conflicts with *Monty Python* and I don't have a VCR. It's been a long enough for me that *Monty Python* bears rewatching.

I turned to *Friday the 13th* mostly out of reviewer's duty, but even then only because I knew that TV censors wouldn't let the show be what the title implied—killiporn like the movies. Instead we got a vastly overlong, vastly banal supernatural horror escapade involving a pair of young twits (listed in TV GUIDE as "Robey" and John Lemay—the guy could be an extra on *Revenge of the Nerds*, the gal has a great future as more chopped meat for the next *Friday the 13th* movie) inheriting an antique store full of cursed merchandise. The plot of the first episode involves an evil doll and an Evil Little Girl... you know the cliche... believe me, you know.

It's a fine Victorian doll, the sort which in the real world would sell for thousands of dollars on the collector's market and nobody, but nobody would ever risk giving to a child. The sheer absurdity temporarily distracted me from the fact that the doll is the best performer in the episode, followed at some distance by the little girl, who is about six and may yet learn how to act. None of the others have even that much excuse.

I'm going to watch *Monty Python* next week. *Friday the 13th: The Series* is poorly written, directed, acted and conceived. The perpetrators couldn't get the substance of the *Friday the 13th* movies on television, but the production value allies haven't changed.



IMMORTALISM:

"The
Long-Range
View"

Immortalism is a product of science and the byproduct of humanistic rationalism. Therefore, most of the significant writings on the subject have been composed by scientists and philosophers such as Robert Farrar Capon, Robert C. W. Ettinger, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michael Novak, Jean Rostand, Bertrand Russell—men principally, properly concerned with The Good Life, rather than merely The Long Life. One might think fancifully of their works as the testaments of an immortalist's bible, to which might be appended an apocrypha consisting of novels by Arthur C. Clarke, Herman Hesse, Michael Moorcock, Chaim Potok, etc. But the most eloquent compositions on the subject of immortalism were penned by the great and feisty Irish dramatist, George Bernard Shaw. *Man and Superman* and the long dramatic cycle, *Back to Methusaleh*, arguably the capstone of Shawian thought and undoubtedly the most moving polemic by a major writer on the ultimate acceptance of the life principle instead of death. Compared with "*Methusaleh*", *Man and Superman* slight, the work of a younger, trickier dramatist. Nearly twenty years separated the composition of the two plays. Yet the earlier work has considerable dramatic merit and is a good introduction to Shaw's concept of the "Life Force", a theme which deepens and darkens in the later composition.

Man and Superman both figuratively and literally a comedy about Don Juan, a mythic character whose appeal (Shaw argues in a preface to the play) is the posture of hubris he classically assumes against the ranged powers of heaven and hell: Don Juan the Blasphemer of Seville who mocks both God and Satan. But hubris, Shaw contends, is much more difficult in bourgeois society; he who defies the mores of his shopkeeper neighbor faces an ostracism more devastating than any excommunication the clergy can devise.

Shaw's metaphorical Don is his protagonist John Tanner, a man nauseated by feminine flirtatiousness, which he perceives as tactics biologically dictated by the Life Force in order to preserve the species. In a delicious comedic flip-flop, Tanner expresses his defiance by refusing to propagate. (He eventually falls "victim" to the Life Force in a great romantic capitulation that traces straight back to the satiric love story in William Congreve's Restoration comedy, *The Way of the World*.)

But *Man and Superman* is also literally a Don Juan play, thanks to the famous "Don Juan in Hell" dream sequence that comprises the bulk of Act III. In it, the theme of the enveloping drama is expanded and explored in a debate between the Don, the Devil, Dona Ana and The Statue. The Life Force is here defined as Nature's growing principle, the evolutionary tide propelling us onward and upward even in our own despite.



Marvin
Kaye

In this comparatively youthful comedy, Shaw is already concerned with a Nietzschean evolving of humanity into ethical "over-men." He suggests that the only meaningful hubris today is against those repressive mores that hamper the Life Force; his distaff protagonist proclaims that it is necessary to find "a father for the superman." But Don Juan adds that "to Life, the force behind the Man, intellect is a necessity, because without it he blunders into death."

This latter sentiment is the seed that flowered two decades later into *Back to Methusaleh*, an eight-act epic that (long before Stanley Kubrick) brackets the beginning and far distant future of the human race. Characterized by Shaw as a "metabiological pentateuch", "*Methusaleh*" preaches the gospel of life without foreseeable end, beginning with the fable of Adam and Eve and the entry of death into the world and concluding in the world of 31,920 A.D., in which people live practically forever, cut short solely by "statistically-inevitable accidents".

In *Back to Methusaleh*, the Life Force is more formidable. It drives humanity onward to questions that only unbounded mental exploration can dimly hope to perceive in countless millennia. This eternal pulse of protoplasm and protein, Shaw contends, must follow its inescapable evolution into immortality. The playwright bemoans the irony that elder statesmen just beginning to understand the historical rhythms of political ideas and movements must be so near death as to render their expertise of little consequence. As we near the time when life may be eliminated by the lemming-like mass suicide of an overpopulating race, it appears to be high time for the Life Force to exercise its Darwinian option and give our leaders the time to salvage the future with the firstlings of true governmental wisdom.

The final act of "*Methusaleh*" has been criticized because its immortals forsake romantic love for the rewards of pure intellect. To those interested in living forever, the idea embeds both warning and promise. Warning: extended life must entail profound spiritual alterations in emotions that derive their traditional piquancy from the shortness of our present span. The promise: though human nature will undergo great change, it still will be human nature, a remarkably resilient institution.

Back to Methusaleh ends with sixty-four lines of moving rhetoric, a speech delivered by the Life Force itself, embodied in the character of the apocryphal earth-mother, Lilith. She praises humanity's decision to embrace life, not death, as the greatest good our species can attain—even though immortality bestows upon us the burden of Purpose, of a quest for Meaning beyond Meaning. The burden, Shaw says, is worth the cost. Lilith proclaims that though the heavens still are filled with vast silence, "my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its utmost confines."

Next issue: Part 7 - Meaning Beyond Meaning ■



LITTLE HEROES by Norman Spinrad (Bantam Spectra, 1987, 486 pp., \$18.95) (ISBN 0-553-05207-1) Reviewed by Doug Fratz

Spinrad's 1969 novel *Bug Jack Barron* was one of that decade's most influential SF novels, introducing many of the themes and motifs that have since appeared in many SF works, most recently including cyberpunk SF. With *Little Heroes*, Spinrad goes back to those roots with a novel that merges '60s sensibilities with some of the style and pacing of '80s cyberpunk.

One primary difference between *Little Heroes* and today's cyberpunk SF is that Spinrad has created characters that he really cares about, and who mature and develop during the novel, primarily through '60s-style expansions of their consciousnesses. (This is in contrast to cyberpunk protagonists who seldom change, and learn only that their suspicions about how the world works are truer than they ever imagined.) Thus we have an aging female near-rock-star who learns the true power of rock and roll, a male computer nerd who learns to outgrow his adolescent emotional shallowness, a talented female nerd who must overcome her poor self-image, a college girl who finds comradeship and success only with a group of kindly ('60s-style) anarchists, and--by far the most memorable character in the book--a Puerto Rican street punk who finds accomplishment and social consciousness, and develops from a pathetic, pseudo-macho, misogynist "wire" addict to a successful and compassionate positive force in the underbelly of society in which he lives.

The milieu of this near-future novel also succeeds in providing an appropriate and believable background for Spinrad's characters. The rock music industry has become even more commercially slick, but has lost its soul and the novel's heroes use a technology that would appear able to provide the final deathblow to true rock--the creation of artificial, computer-generated rock personalities--to bring about a rebirth of the true spirit of rock and roll. The hallucinogens

REVIEWS BOOKS, ETC.



THE FORGE OF GOD by Greg Bear (Tor Books, 1987, 473 pp., \$17.95) (ISBN 0-312-93021-6) Reviewed by Dean R. Lambe

It's been a long time since I was riveted to my chair by the creative grandeur and stimulating prose of a single novel. Bear has given us one of those gems that becomes a classic within the author's lifetime. *The Forge of God* is all the good stuff of decades of SF gimmicks in one smoothly-flowing package.

For about nine months, from June, 1996 to March, 1997, we're treated to the last pregnancy the Earth will ever know, a terrible seeding of the entire planet, the end of Gaia and her organelles. The horror begins quietly, distantly, with the disappearance of Europa, and the puzzlement of more good men than Arthur Gordon, former Presidential Science Advisor. Action shifts to Death Valley, where three geologists and a store owner encounter an extraterrestrial Guest and its bizarre spaceship, and change their lives by calling the Air Force. Confusion reigns as the Australians reveal that their own phony rock from the stars carries three wise robots who welcome us to the galactic community. U.S. President Crockerman visits the Guest, hears a tale of von Neumann machine planet-killers, and gets religion. Science writer Trevor Hicks stumbles upon the story of a lifetime and comes to realize how little that means. And that's just the beginning; I won't presume to spoil any more of the gut-wrenching adrenaline that Bear has in store for you.

This is one of those novels we point to with a sigh, and say, "If only Hollywood could..." In fact, Bear reminds us of all the sci-fi terrors we've seen and read (with a nod to a lot of authors), and then goes on to dazzle us with his imagination. His penchant for metaphysics, which left his *Eon* floundering, is well-controlled here--just enough to twist a neuron or three as the asteroids go pop in the night. Buy this book immediately; it will be on the award ballots. In case it's not fiction, you might benefit from the head start.

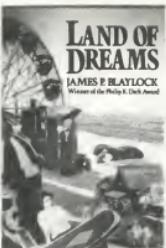


of the '60s are replaced by "wire," highly effective microelectronic alterers of consciousness and perception. And all of these parts work together seamlessly.

To fully appreciate Spinrad's novel, it helps to have some fond memories of '60s counter culture. If you can remember a time when a revolution of sex and drugs and rock'n'roll appeared the proper route to a new and better social order--or maybe just want to understand better the '60s mindset--you should find *Little Heroes* an uplifting reading experience, right down to the convenient and unbelievably happy ending, where all the little heroes who learned their lessons well are amply rewarded.

LAND OF DREAMS by James P. Blaylock (Arbor House, 1987, 264 pp., \$16.95) (ISBN 0-87795-898-X) Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

If Peter Bruegel the Elder had painted a picture of what happens in James P. Blaylock's *Land of Dreams*, it would probably have been titled "The Burning Carnival" or perhaps "Children's Games in the Tower of Babel." If Bruegel's predecessor Hieronymous



Bosch had painted it, it would have been "The Garden of Unearthly Delights" or "The Temptation of the Ship of Fools." Bosch, Bruegel, Blaylock—all are working in the same surrealistic landscape, but Blaylock paints with words and is four or five hundred years more up to date.

Up to date in the sense that *Dreams* takes place in Northern California and includes railroad trains and carnival rides among the props, but timeless in the ethereal—almost eldritch—qualities of Blaylock's weird world. Or worlds, rather, for we soon learn that during the "twelve year Solstice" which is taking place as the story opens, it is possible to cross over into various other worlds, past, present and future. Each time the so-called solstice takes place, weird things start to happen—such as the washing ashore of an enormous shoe, which is soon discovered by one of our youthful heroes, Skeezez.

This makes for an eerie beginning and Blaylock strives mightily to keep the surrealism real, but for me the whole thing never quite came into focus. The three protagonists are Jack, who is seeking to follow a father who crossed over during the last solstice; Skeezez, who mostly follows Jack's lead; and Helen, who traffics with an attic ghost whose husband has also gone across. This trio is likeable enough and their adventures will hold your attention easily—but they never quite seem real, and as characters they are only skin deep. Similarly, the villains (there are several) are never as menacing as you'd expect and their motivation is nonexistent. While the town of Rio Del is realistically presented, the strange solstice carnival and the surrealistic passage to the other worlds are only sketched and are never real enough to get your eyes into.

Nevertheless, Blaylock deserves high marks for his *Dreams* because it is, for the most part, an enjoyable read and a worthwhile one. He is very good at building surrealistic scenarios and a narrative tension that holds your interest, even if you are left with the feeling that the tension was as unreal as the scenario. Blaylock is obviously a writer of great promise—this is his fifth novel, and I'll bet that it isn't his last. I'm looking forward to seeing what he'll dream up next.

LIFE DURING WARTIME by Lucius Shepard (Bantam Spectra, 1987, 438 pp., \$7.95) (ISBN 0-553-34381-5) Reviewed by Doug Fatz

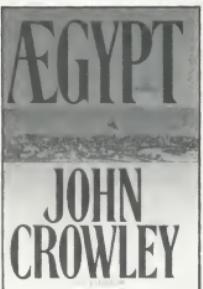
Lucius Shepard's second novel takes us once again to his near-future



Central-American war, the background for some of his most intensely memorable short SF. *Life During Wartime* is in fact an expansion of his fine novella, "R&R", which makes up the first 5 chapters. Despite its beginning with one of the best novellas of the '80s, or perhaps partially because of it, *Wartime* clearly demonstrates that Shepard has not yet learned how to apply his extraordinary literary talents to the novel format.

The book has touches of brilliance throughout, but remains a disjointed work which cries out for another rewrite. After "R&R" ends, the story jumps disorientingly to many months later when Mingolla is undergoing drug therapy and training to join Psicorp. The balance of the book consists of various narrative segments centering on Mingolla, and most of them are quite good. (One segment covering Mingolla's overland trek to Panama is as fine a fantasy quest segment as one could ever want.) But the whole is not greater than (or even equal to) the sum of its parts.

The searing brilliance of much of Shepard's short fiction makes one tend to forget that he is in the infancy of his literary career. There is still every hope that Lucius Shepard's talents will continue to mature, and that one day he will bring the novel into the scope of his skills.



AEGYPT by John Crowley (Bantam Spectra, 1987, 390 pp., \$17.95) (ISBN 0-553-05194-6) Reviewed by Eugene Lin

John Crowley, once a very promising SF writer, turned to fantasy in 1984 with *Little, Big*. A World Fantasy Award later, it was clear

that Crowley was much more popular as a fantasist. What was not clear was *Little, Big* itself. Crowley's long novel seemed to some an unenticing mélange of a little occultism and a lot of obscurantism. Part of its popularity, perhaps, stemmed from its contentions that the mundane world is a little less mundane than we usually think. Crowley's silly question "Do you believe in faeries?" is more compelling, more relevant, than S&S or high fantasy. In any case, Faeries and Rosicrucians, no matter what one thinks of them, are a refreshing change from barbarians and dwarves. But if *Little, Big* pushed reality in all the right places, Crowley's latest novel is a bulldozer, making a valiant attempt to transform reality.

The relevant sentence in *Aegypt* is "There is more than one history of the world." In fact, there are two, one of them secret, having been submerged in the Age of Reason. Pierce Moffet, an unemployed and undistinguished historian, begins to see the outlines of this secret history. It's the stuff of dreams: the ancient Egypt of Moffet's childhood, the Egypt of mystical mystery usually portrayed in historical novels, is real—along with a lot more. Not Egypt, but *Aegypt*. *Aegypt* is real, Crowley says, in the same sense that the ideas that gypsies can tell fortunes and secret societies control the world are real. They are myths, but myths that shape history; that is, the idea that certain things are true makes them effectively true in that they do influence human actions and thoughts, forming a secret history that we live inside of—a history structured by "myths" rather than facts. The concept of *Aegypt*, in particular, was in great part engendered by Hermes Trismegistes' forged versions of ancient Egyptian writings, which caused a sensation when rediscovered in the fourteenth century. Influenced by Hermes, Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake when he proposed that the universe was infinite. Moffet's interests in Bruno and *Aegypt* intertwine, and he decides to write a book on his rediscovery of *Aegypt* and the mystical heritage of the world.

Moffet does not strive alone. Crowley also throws in Rosie Rasmussen who, while going through a divorce, reads the historical novels of Fellowes Kraft, one of which deals with Elizabethan magician Doctor Dee's attempts at divine communion. Doctor Dee seems destined to meet Bruno, and Rosie, of course, meets Moffet. Disparate elements start to converge and take shape, but nothing is resolved in the end.

All this is fine material for a fantasy, but *Aegypt* has greater pretensions. It is clearly an attack on rationalism and the positivistic view of history (Crowley calls the Age of Reason a "shuttered mansion.") It probably has something to do with Freemasonry and the work of some obscure writers Crowley mentions in the preface. I think it's more reasonable to call *Aegypt* a shuttered mansion—it makes for an imposing edifice, but unless one has Crowley's esoteric knowledge, parts of his novel are impenetrable. Hard SF fans will no doubt look askance at Crowley's secret history, but its appeal is primarily aesthetic, and its thesis is not subject to proof or disproof. *Aegypt*, like *Little, Big*, will appeal to people of certain sensibilities, but Crowley's dream history will seem like a pipe dream to everyone else. I "liked" *Little, Big*, but in the case of Crowley's latest foray into fantasy, I have to sympathize

with the latter group. Historical fantasies are very popular today, but it seems that Crowley has written a fantasy about what we would like history to be. Although Crowley states that his history is not "better" than mundane history, it certainly seems that way. Ultimately, there's not enough on history itself. Crowley goes on and on about the existence of a secret history, but what his door into summer actually is gets lost in the hubbub. But maybe it's too early to pass judgement: there will almost certainly be other novels to follow. The secret history of the world is incomplete.

And the novel itself? Well, Crowley, as everyone would expect, is still a damn good writer. His prose is in top form, deft and evocative. Crowley knows people (or at least, certain kinds of people) and here his skill at characterization is as evident as ever. Unfortunately, even though Crowley says history has a plot, his delineation of this history has very little plot. Aegypt is definitely not an evening's fare. Still, I found it more readable than Little, Big.

Whatever it is, Aegypt is impressive. I really mean this: you should read it just to be impressed, and there's plenty in Aegypt for that, what with its narrative art, its sheer audacity, its alluring intimations, its grand design.



TREKMASTER by James B. Johnson (DAW Books, 1987, 397 pp., \$3.50) (ISBN 0-88677-221-4) Reviewed by Jeremiah Patrick Reilly

The action starts in the first chapter when a wild snarv, a gift in honor of the King's birthday, snaps its chain and attacks Thomas Jefferson Shepherd, Trekmaster, King of Bear Ridge. TJ, sword in hand, confronts the wild creature until the palace guards can dispatch it. So begins this novel of Bear Ridge, a world colonized by Olde Earth. Bear Ridge's civilization collapsed when contact with Earth broke off during the Rollback Wars. Centuries later, contact resumed, TJ has applied to the Federation of Planets for admission, hoping to secure the technological advances admission would bring.

Trekmaster is not simply a clichéd novel of a world recovering from lost contact,

however. TJ, an iconoclastic personality, is a man of vision and political shrewdness. But not every denizen of Bear Ridge accepts his vision; some oppose admission to the Federation because sudden technological change might be harmful or disrupt economic interests. Perhaps the snarv attack was an assassination attempt.

Johnson handles the evolution of a world cut off from Earth with great originality. The people of Bear Ridge know Earth history. The Catholic Church flourishes. Technology deteriorates only because machinery breaks and runs down. A heterogenous population confronted with a world of harsh weather extremes does what it must: survive in the bad times, fight among themselves in the good. From such elements TJ unifies Bear Ridge in the horrific Consolidation Wars.

What I like about this novel is the diversity and depth of many characters: king, jester, prince, Federation ambassador, each is more complex than first appearances suggest. Next, the sense of humor implicit in a government designed by a king who manages by objective ("Don't forget the Seven P Principle: Proper prior planning prevents piss poor performance.") Finally, the Webbinies, quasi-aquatic creatures who are the first sentient beings ever discovered by humankind. These aliens are really alien—and they are playing their own game of politics.

The flavor of *Trekmaster* closely resembles that of Edgar Rice Burroughs' Martian series. One of TJ's initial regal acts was to ban all lawyers. Remember John Carter's observation: "In one respect, at least, the Martians are a happy people: they have no lawyers."



ISAAC ASIMOV'S ROBOT CITY - BOOK 1: ODYSSEY by Michael P. Kube-McDowell (Ace Books, 1987, 211 pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-441-73122-8)

ISAAC ASIMOV'S ROBOT CITY - BOOK 2: SUSPICION by Mike McQuay (Ace Books, 1987, 177 pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-441-73126-0) Reviewed by Doug Fratz

These two books begin an apparently open-ended series based on what in Hollywood might be called a "high concept": You take material of well-established commercial popularity (i.e. Isaac Asimov's robot novels), develop a concept for a new work of the same type and formula, make it an open-ended, continuing series, and churn out the episodes at a carefully planned frequency. Commercially speaking, it just can't miss.

A cooperative effort between Isaac

Asimov, Byron Preiss Visual Publications, Ace Books, and a continuously growing series of talented young SF authors now brings us Isaac Asimov's *Robot City*. They have developed what appears so far to be a very intriguing Asimov robot novel. In these first two books, authors Kube-McDowell and McQuay have each been given a narrative segment equal to about 1/5th to 1/3rd of a complete Asimov novel, and have been assigned to pad out that segment into a book-length manuscript, in exact imitation of Asimov's writing style.

These books are really quite remarkable pastiches, with Kube-McDowell being especially successful. Even the human protagonists are Asimovian in their attitudes, especially regarding male-female interactions.

Despite the padding, both of these volumes are quick and easy reads, and the series promises to be well-received by avid Asimov fans who can't find enough of the real thing. (William F. Wu's 3rd book has already been released.) Still, one can't help to wonder whether there might be more valuable things for these young authors to be doing--like writing their OWN books.



MINDPLAYERS by Pat Cadigan (Bantam, 1987, 276 pp., \$3.50) (ISBN 0-553-26585-7) Reviewed by Andrew Andrews

Pat Cadigan is a writer of "cyberpunk" (a definition for which still eludes most critics), a thoughtful writer of the doings of "inner space," an explorer of the human ideas, a writer who has walked the walk to master how to tell a fresh, jarring, unpredictable tale, and this is her first novel.

Mindplayers traces the psychoworld of "mindplaying"—the ability to enter into disturbed minds. As a result of mischief induced by a psychosis peddler, one mindplayer, Alexandria Victor Haas, is caught and sentenced to pathos-finding training. It is a landscape of unpredictability—dreams within dreams—and her voyage into the distant lands of the mind.

This is a tale ripe with ideas. Cadigan lacks

in only one area: the ability to portray believable characters. If she could take her time with these nuances, *Mindplayers* would be stunning. As it is—and this may be good enough for a first novel—it is a tale of vast speculation about the human mind, well worth reading.

THROUGH DARKEST AMERICA by Neal Barrett, Jr. (Congdon & Weed, 1987, 275 pp., \$15.95) (ISBN 0-86553-184-6) Reviewed by Howard Coleman

The "Isaac Asimov Presents" series, published by Congdon & Weed in association with Davis Publishing, is intended to showcase "the most exciting new talents in science fiction." That's an odd characterization of Neal Barrett, Jr., who has published more than a half-dozen SF novels over the past couple of decades, but no matter, this is a tale by one of the best storytellers in the genre, however you wrap it.

It's common these days to associate the cutting edge of SF realism with the street savvy of high-tech Neuromantic futures.

Barrett gives us a different sort of grim reality with his story of Howie Ryder, growing up in post-holocaust Tennessee, a century after the War. *Through Darkest America* is an adventure tale with more than a fair share of disturbing undertones.

This post-War America has achieved a rural society much like the nineteenth century United States of our memory and mythology. Right alongside the familiar, though, are the differences, and the horror, the War has brought about.

No high-tech here. Even horses and guns

AUDIO SF REVIEWS: Old Masters...New Medium

by David F. Hamilton

Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke are two of science fiction's legendary figures, and deservedly so. They have built long and laudable careers in a field of immense competition, a field where being "ahead of your time" is a prerequisite. There can be no doubt that these venerable gentlemen have nothing left to prove to their public. So, it is an indication of the flexibility and innovative nature of the science fiction field in general, and these Grand Masters in particular, that they have chosen at this stage in their careers to enter into a new medium.

As with most great experiments, the initial results have been mixed.

THE GODS THEMSELVES by Isaac Asimov (Warner Audio Publishing, P.O. Box 211, 70 Greenwich Avenue, New York, NY 10011, \$14.95) (ISBN 0-87188-122-5)

The Gods Themselves is an example of a poor translation of a good story from book to cassette. It seems as though the abridgement of Dr. Asimov's work was done with a butcher's knife, rather than a surgical scalpel. The original novel was divided into three sections: "Against Stupidity," "The Gods Themselves," and "Content in Vain?"; "Against Stupidity" has been hacked out of this audio version, and while one can still enjoy the story and understand the resolution, major damage has been done. "Against Stupidity" introduces the characters of Dr. Peter Lamont and Benjamin Dennison, and gives you a feel for their motivations. These are NOT minor characters who occupy the first segment of the book and then disappear! They are major driving forces throughout the story, and their work is the central element of the novel's denouement.

The elimination of this portion of the manuscript is unacceptable. In addition to the unnecessary clouding of the plotline, it robs the listener of the chance to enjoy some of the unusual stylistic niceties Dr. Asimov has woven into this section of the manuscript. Taken independent of the book, *The Gods Themselves* is an enjoyable story, competently read by Gale Garnett, but it is disappointing because it could have been so much better.

STORIES FROM THE COMPLETE ROBOT by Isaac Asimov (Waldentapes, P.O. Box 1084, Stamford, CT 06904, \$14.95) (ISBN 0-681-32779-0)

"Jehoshaphat, Daniel! This is much better than that other cassette." Waldentapes has done a nice job of transposing some of Asimov's now-classic Robot stories, and made a thoroughly enjoyable listening experience.

Lije Bailey, Dr. Susan Calvin, and R. Daniel Olivaw are brought deliciously to life through an outstanding reading by Lloyd Battista. In one story, Lije Bailey is faced with determining which of two robots telling identical stories, save for a "Mirror Image" reversal of names, is telling the truth. In another, Dr. Susan Calvin is faced with trying to determine if a man running for political office is really a man, or a robot. And if he is a robot, would he do a better or worse job? The third story deals with racial prejudice between men and robots in a future where men are accumulating more and more robotic parts.

This is an outstanding collection of stories, and is made even more enjoyable by the introductions, provided by the author himself.

CHILDHOOD'S END by Arthur C. Clarke (Warner Audio Publishing, P.O. Box 211, 70 Greenwich Avenue, New York, NY 10011, \$14.95) (ISBN 0-87188-108-X)

Warner Audio has done far better with its adaptation of *Childhood's End*, than they did with *The Gods Themselves*. The abridgement here is far less jarring, and the reading by Robert Trumbull is competent, if unspectacular. At least, the story is allowed to unfold naturally, as it did in the book.

Childhood's End is classic Clarke on an epic scale. It is a story that deals with, among other things: a super race called the Overlords who take instant total control of the Earth, an underground resistance movement bent on destroying the Overlords even though they have raised the standard of living for all of humanity, and the end of life as we know it and the planet we call home. All these are woven into an elegant tapestry by Clarke's masterful hand.

Who are the Overlords? Are they really as benevolent as they seem? Are they, as they claim, only pawns of an even more advanced consciousness called the Overmind? What is happening to the children? *Childhood's End* is a novel that asks fascinating questions about the nature of man, and provides intriguing, thought-provoking answers. A worthy addition to your audio library.

THE SONGS OF DISTANT EARTH by Arthur C. Clarke (Random House Audio Books, 201 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022, \$14.95) (ISBN 0-394-55904-5)

If you can only afford to buy one of the tapes reviewed here today, this is the one! *The Songs of Distant Earth* represents near-perfection in the production of a novel on cassette. If the story had been presented unabridged, it would have attained perfection. Random House Audio Books is definitely the "class act" in the audio-SF field.

First, the packaging. An attractive slipcase is adorned with the original Michael Whelan painting from the dust jacket of the novel. Inside, two individual cassette holders featuring the same artwork, with a listing of available titles on the reverse side. The cassette itself is recorded in Dolby sound, giving it a recording quality far beyond any of the others I've heard.

Second, the production, which features a beautifully complementary score composed by Scott Killian. Even the abridgement is handled tactfully, with a second narrator, Lewis Grenville, taking us through the sections that have been abridged. The principal narrator is as inspired a piece of casting as I have yet encountered on an audio tape—The Songs of Distant Earth is read to us by Keir Dullea (Dave Bowman from *2001: A Space Odyssey*.) Dullea's reading projects just the right sense of wonder for this story of man's transcendence. He seems particularly at home with the character of Moses Calidor, a deeply philosophical man who carries on an ongoing conversation with his long-dead wife throughout much of the novel.

Finally, there is the story itself. It is a story about mankind's flight to the stars following the explosion of our sun. It is the story of Thalassa, a planet almost totally covered by oceans—a colony with which contact had been lost, and was assumed to have been destroyed. It is the story of Magellan, a seedship on its way to start a new world, which stops at Thalassa and changes everything. But most of all, it is a story about people. Ordinary people, real people, caught up in an extraordinary situation. How they act and react gives us as much insight into human nature as any sociology textbook ever could.

This is the stuff of great fiction, and *The Songs of Distant Earth* is an essential addition to any audio-SF collection.

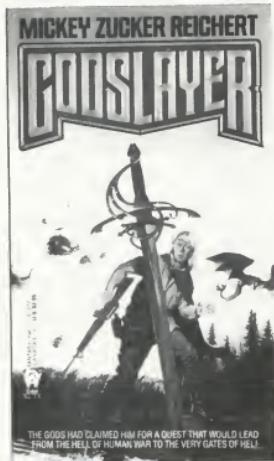
are so rare only soldiers and outlaws have them. And it is a lawless time indeed: government survives just well enough to tax its people and fight wars against the Rebels. Howie's father's small farm provides a hard living: a few crops and some livestock for meat.

But animals were almost obliterated during the War ("there's only one animal"), and the "meat" raised on farms walks on two legs.

Howie's home, family, and childhood are ripped away from him, and he finds himself hurled across the country at the mercy of thieves, rebels, and soldiers. He experiences a little love and friendship, but mostly he learns mistrust, hatred, and the ways of vengeance. Like everyone else in his cruel world, he is in control of little, and, if terrible things happen to him, they happen to those around him, too. This is not a time for winners.

We'd like to dismiss this as just another violent story of some other place and time, but Barrett has set his traps with care. There's too much of the familiar about all this, too much of our past. No one bemoans the fate of "bucks" and "mares"; they're animals, no matter how much they look like people, anyone can see that—another somber reflection of the past.

Barrett does not burden his riveting narrative with a weighty message. But when we start to sort out how much is real, and how much imagined, the distinction blurs. All too much of this book rings true.



GODSLAYER by Mickey Zucker Reichert (DAW Books, 1987, 222 pp., \$2.95) (ISBN 0-88677-207-9) Reviewed by Jeremiah Patrick Reilly

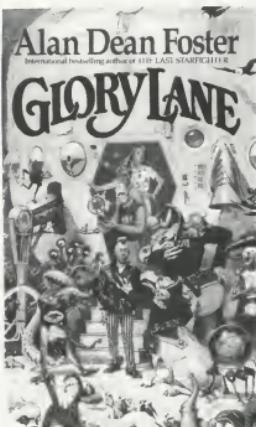
This is a refreshingly daring novel. Daring for its many breaks from traditional fantasy. Daring for its hero: Al Larson, an American soldier fighting in Vietnam, conveyed, in his dying moment, by Freyr, the Norse god of

war, to Midgard, one of the nine Norse worlds. Only now, Al Larson is a light elf pursuing an unknown purpose of a Norse god. Daring for his companions: Slime, a powerful mage who has dedicated her life to protecting humanity from the vindictive machinations of her half brother, a half-breed dark elf, Brämin, an even more powerful sorcerer; and Kensi Gaelinair, an enigmatic yet charming samurai warrior (that's right, a Japanese ronin who has bound himself to Slime) who follows his own code of ethics and fealty—gods who are something other than plain vanilla omnipotent spoilsports. From these elements, writer Reichert blends a savvy fantasy.

Lord Allerum, as Al Larson is known in Midgard, must find his mission and find his own ethic of existence in a battle of evil versus good, older than Adam and Eve. All the while, he is plagued by devastating flashbacks to the horrors he experienced in Vietnam. He is distracted by a growing love for Slime. And, he must make choices blind to their ultimate consequences.

Godslayer is reminiscent of two other daring novels: It resembles *Knee-Deep in Thunder* by Sheila Moon (look for this book, it's rare) which uses Navajo mythology as the basis for its plot. And *Red Moon and Black Mountain* by Joy Chant in which Li-vanh confronts choices as powerful as those Allerum faces.

Godslayer is funny, touching, sad, impelling, and ultimately satisfying. Read it. DAW should be praised for daring to publish it. And, I hope it marks a new trend in fantasy.



GLORY LANE by Alan Dean Foster (Ace, 1987, 295 pp., \$3.50) (ISBN 0-441-51664-5) Reviewed by Dean R. Lambe

A quarter-century back on this timeline, Mr. Heinlein booted Scar Gordon from his "Safe Generation" leisure in the south of France to the multiple-universe dragon peril and comely Princess of a Glory Road. In the midst of the "Me Generation," another prolific

Dean of science fiction aims for a narrower path, and peoples his *Lane* with a punk-rocker, a nerd, and a Texas shopping mall princess. Go figure.

Doing humor, of course, is hard work. So few succeed, especially in SF, and burnouts like Robert Sheckley or rut-sticks like Ron Goulart are common. Foster has managed tongue-in-cheek fun romps well in the past, and this time he pulls out all the stops. When Seeth the punk notices a bowling ball making right-angle turns in an Albuquerque lane, he inadvertently befriends a large green man, Arthwitt Rail, who just happens to have a starship parked outside of town. Turns out the bowling ball, whose name is Izmir and whose nine-pin talents don't begin to scratch the surface of its talents, is sought rather much by the Oomenians--not to mention the Prutillians, the true human beings, the Isotat, the Sikans, and the rest of the known universe. Before Rail and Seeth slip the bonds of Earth and head for the really weird, they add Kerwin, the perpetual college sophomore, and Miranda, the incredibly beautiful, to their wacky entourage. Miranda's bohunk boyfriend gets pissed off, and then the plot gets truly silly.

The Jim Gurney wraparound cover is outstanding, even if it's designed to attract Lucas-Spielberg addicts. Between the covers is more than simple fluff, and a lot of honest laughs. You won't regret trading some of your beer money for this one.



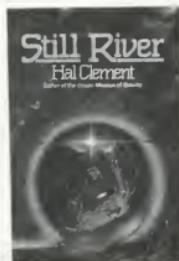
SIGN OF CHAOS by Roger Zelazny (Arbor House, 1987, 214 pp., \$15.95) (ISBN 0-87795-926-9) Reviewed by Neal Wiglus

The bad news is that this latest installment of the Amber series is so totally dependent on the earlier books that it will make little sense to a reader not totally familiar with what's gone before. The good news is that Zelazny is still entertaining enough that it doesn't matter a hell of a lot whether you know what's going on, or where it might be leading, or anything else. Period.

This "novel" is, in fact, really just the next twelve chapters in the larger novel that is being marketed as a series. *Sign of Chaos* opens where the previous "novel," *Blood of Amber*, left off—with our hero Merlin Corey drinking it up with the White Rabbit, a grinning cat and Luke Reynard, Merlin's friendly enemy. In the course of the story Luke and Merle join forces against some common enemy or other, a new Corwin walks the Pattern, Luke's mother is released to engage in a climactic battle with Mask and Whatshisname, and there's all kinds of

magical fireworks going off all over the place. Wow!

I think some of Zelazny's non-Amber books are among the very best science fiction ever, but I gave up on the Amber series after the very first one, *Nine Princes in Amber* (1970), so I'm only slightly better off than a reader with no familiarity with the series at all. Arbor House is publishing some of the best SF books around, but they do us all a disservice when they don't make Zelazny even attempt to make each volume stand independently. *Sign of Chaos* is fun, but I can only recommend it to hard-core Amber fans, I'm afraid.



STILL RIVER by Hal Clement (Del Rey, 1987, 279 pp., \$16.95) (ISBN 0-345-32816-3)
Reviewed by Dean R. Lambe

Could the writer whose name is synonymous with "hard science fiction" have written a novel that's simply too "hard"? Perhaps, for *Still River* requires a very sophisticated appreciation of chemistry, meteorology, geology, and a host of other specialized details.

Not surprisingly for a man who's spent his life teaching, Harry Stubbs' latest work is the ultimate in classroom exercises, a grandiose experimental investigation of Enigma 88 by five very different students. Molly Chmenici is not only the only human candidate for the Respected Opinion degree at this far-future alien university, she's the only one of the team whose body temperature is well above the freezing point of water. And Molly isn't even the focal point of the story, for with her more than cold-blooded companions, she must solve the riddle of a very young planet with a most bizarre atmosphere and a thoroughly improbable variety of lifeforms. Each student brings a unique background, cultural bias, and hypothesis to Enigma, and suddenly the investigation turns dangerous, as first one, then another misjudges planetary conditions. Molly and the little Shervah, Carol (as the human's translator renders it) find themselves lost in a vast system of underground caverns. As their colleagues struggle to rescue them, further mysteries about Enigma are revealed. Despite their fine minds and an impressive robot technology, the students begin to fear that their teachers have set more than a test before them; failure could mean their very lives.

Still River is not a novel for novices. Few will appreciate the detailed world-building that Clement has put into this work. While the awkward opening and atypical characterization techniques will put off some

readers, those who know that scientific discovery is both action and adventure will find treasure here. Sadly, the enigmas remaining at the end don't quite repay the diligent reader.

FACES by Leigh Kennedy (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987, 152 pp., \$15.95) (ISBN 0-87113-140-4) Reviewed by Neal Wilgus

Faces might have been titled *Slices*, since these ten light-weight tales are of the slice-of-life school so beloved by mainstream publishers such as Atlantic Monthly Press. The slice-of-life, of course, is light on plot and heavy on mood, character or symbolism, so almost by definition it has very limited appeal to the SF/fantasy community. This is not to say that good SF slices aren't possible, only that they're rare.



MISSION EARTH

The Biggest Science Fiction dekalog ever written!
By the author of the great bestseller: *Battlefield Earth*.*

Earth is invaded by aliens! Can Earth survive? Can the aliens survive? Find out in **MISSION EARTH**, the captivating 10-volume Science Fiction epic that hundreds of thousands are reading and talking about. Subscribe to the series now! You'll get months of great reading and will LOVE every minute of it!

Don't wait another minute to get in on the fun, excitement, adventure, and romance. Subscribe to the **MISSION EARTH** series today! Take advantage of one of the money saving plans below:

PLAN A: SAVE 20%

\$16.16 reserves your full 10-volume set and pays for your first volume. (Indicate which volume you wish to start your subscription with). Remaining volumes are sent approximately every 60 days. Pay \$16.16 for each book within 30 days of receipt. You may cancel your subscription at any time.

PLAN B: SAVE 25%

Get extra savings when you pay in advance for the entire set. Only \$142.12, plus \$1000 postage and handling. Regular price: \$189.50. All 10 currently released volumes will be mailed together. Each

Overall the SF/fantasy content of *Faces* is moderate, if not minimal. Three of the stories
-----continued on page 30

Bigger than
LORD OF THE RINGS
Bigger than
THE DUNE SERIES

L. RON HUBBARD'S

**EVERY VOLUME RELEASED TO DATE A
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER!**

Volume One
Volume Two

INVADERS PLAN*
BLACK GENESIS*
FORTESS OF EVIL*

Volume Three
Volume Four
Volume Five
Volume Six
Volume Seven
Volume Eight
Volume Nine
Volume Ten

THE ENEMY WITHIN*
AN ALIEN AFFAIR*
FORTUNE OF FEAR*
DEATH QUEST*
VOYAGE OF VENGEANCE*
DISASTER*
VILLAINY VICTORIOUS*
THE DOOMED PLANET*

* = already released

FREE! FREE! FREE!

Free bonus if you act now! Act now and receive, absolutely free, the *Mission Earth* 1987 calendar with one new and exciting Science Fiction illustration for each month. Also receive by the national bestselling *MISSION EARTH* series. Contains vital Science Fiction dates and events.

ACT NOW! ORDER FORM-MAIL TODAY!

CHECK ONE Plan A Plan B

Amount Enclosed*: \$ _____

C.O.D. (applies only to Plan A)

CHECK ONE METHOD OF PAYMENT

Check or Money Order (Payable to Bridge Publications)

VISA MASTERCARD

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

*California residents add 6% sales tax

10-DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE!

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

MAIL TO: BRIDGE PUBLICATIONS, INC.

1414 N. Catalina St., Los Angeles, CA 90027

ORDER BY PHONE

Call Toll-Free 1-800-722-1733 or

1-800-843-7389 within California

Dekalogy: A series of 10 volumes. Copyright © 1987 Bridge Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.



Send all letters of comment to: Thrust Publications, 8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877 U.S.A. Deadline for letters for publication in THRUST 30 is February 1, 1988.

Gregory Benford
Physics Department
University of California
Irvine, CA 92717

I much enjoyed THRUST 27. Good issue, crackling pieces.

Mike Bishop is quite right about Pam Sargent. It's odd how patient attention to detail takes such a long time to make its mark in SF, but perhaps we shouldn't be surprised. The field does respond better to speed and glitz, no matter that these don't wear well. Notice how the New Wave novels didn't appear at all in the recent LOCUS poll of the best all-time novels in the field. They loomed large at the time, but don't weather well. Pam's slow coming into the limelight may be because she has always had the virtues of the 19th century novelist—solid background and character—instead of flashy ideas, which are usually all that count with a lot of readers.

Mike hints—and I think he's right—that the period of consolidation (say, 1973 to 1983) seemed less spectacular to some precisely because it was free of proclamations, broadsides and manifestos. Integrating New Wave methods into the larger body of SF took time and produced works that outdistanced any of the New Wave works—*Gateway*, for example. Yet all this was done without much shouting. And the recent manifesto mongers have oddly interpreted this as meaning that nothing was going on. Pam has been among the writers ignored by this lazy view, and I'm happy to see her getting recognition at last.

Janrae Frank's incisive piece in THRUST 28 on wifher feminism in SF cuts quite to the quick of the matter. The fate of all (name your cause)-ism fiction is to be relegated to the conventional wisdom of the field, once its point is accepted or at least placed in perspective. Equality turns out to be more interesting than oppositional postures, no matter how imaginative.

I think she's missed one of the most interesting women writers to emerge in this decade, though, who has a quietly effective way of reflecting on these problems: Sheila Finch. Her *Triad* is an insightful look at a future where men are subject to polite oppression, as well as a first class alien contact novel with new linguistic ideas.

As [Doug Frazt's] review of *The Handmaid's Tale* makes clear, it's a lot easier to tart up a feminist dystopia with emotionally gripping scenes than it is to imagine a concrete, plausible society. I suspect the failure of earlier works like Suzy Charnas's to reach a large audience lay in that difficulty. But M. Atwood plays on different ground; most readers outside SF simply don't have the fundamentals required to see that her future makes little sense. So feminist topics have gotten easier to write outside the genre, precisely because we've gotten so choosy.

Jessica Amanda Salmonson
Box 20610
Seattle, WA 98102

Because my first anthology (*Amazons*)

Counter-Thrusts



LETTERS

garnered two World Fantasy Awards (the second to Elizabeth Lynn's piece as Best Short Story), has been kept in print and translated into Dutch, German, Norwegian and Italian, with two movies coming out of the content (Michelle Belling's and Charles Saunders' stories adapted to film), and continues to this day to get critical attention, it can be said to be one of the more influential anthologies of the last ten years. It must have been timely. Certainly the two *Amazons* volumes are not artistically superior to the *Herole Visions* anthologies that made no splash.

Amazons opened a flood-gate so that the idea of the sword-swinging woman is now as cliché as you can get, or seems so. The real flaw of these books is that they are written by people with little talent for publishers who don't want critical or artistic successes which are economic disasters. The majority are written by women (I think in part because they pay so badly; historically, women have dominated the literature in times and areas where it paid the least, and when it started to pay, men moved in). Their inspiration may have been the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series, riddled with classics encountered in their adolescent years. But what they've derived from it is not the genius but something filtered through *Dungeons and Dragons* and the same sentiment that birthed Regency Romances and bodice-ripper historicals. Because of the radical feminism of the '70s, these new romances are often enough about swashbuckling women rather than court maidens, but the adolescence of the vision is essentially the same. Get rid of these types of books: woman-meets-her-equal, woman-meets-dragon, woman-rides-unicorn, meaningless-quest, open-ended static series, gameable and shared-world... and what is left? I'm afraid only Tanith Lee is left.

These books are, I believe, basically feminist, but not creatively feminist, and they are failures as art because of the essentially mediocre nature of the writers themselves, of the audience that exists for fantasy, and of the publishers and editors who wouldn't be able to tell a new *Earthsea* from a new *Thieves World* if it were shown to them.

There was a parallel in the 1850s, a period I've been researching in connection with a book for Doubleday. The majority of the novelists were women. They were inspired by two great writers: Jane Austin and Emily Bronte. But the '50s imitations lack the least understanding of the genius that sparked their millionaire-daughter imaginations. The books dwell overmuch on uplifting religiosity, sentimentally silly love affairs (chaste, of course), and buckets of tears. Similarly today's fantasists are to a preponderance women inspired by such great writers as LeGuin and Walton and the whole of Betty Ballantine's Adult Fantasy classics. But the '80s imitations have selected out the most banal elements, married them to historical romance and role-playing games, and achieved nothing of art but much of adolescent wish-fulfillment.

I do want to footnote that my own approach is a throw-back to the symbolists, the Decadents, the Romantics, the ornamentalists—ultimately to Poe—the very writers that inspired Dunsany, Cabell and Addison. I've wedded this to a few private "isms," especially cynicism and feminism, and brought my personal vision that is fiery and morose. So I'd like to think my *Tanice Gozen* volumes are an exception, though I'm not always certain of it, as they're published in the same way for the same people and have the same kind of success. I appreciate my fans, but they do often lump me with the "avorites" I know not to have a tad of talent, and am I to think this is due to a general lack of critical faculty or that my work is as thoroughly genre-stricken as the rest?

My anthology for The Feminist Press will be issued in 1988 as *What Did Miss Barrington See?*: Feminist Supernatural Literature of the 19th & 20th Centuries. The earliest tales are from the 1850s with a great many from 1870-1920. The modern portion includes magic realists such as Armonia Somers and Americans and Brits such as Lisa Tuttle, Barbara Burford and Jules Faye. There is NO SHORTAGE of feminist fantasy with a biting edge to it, but because genre fiction by its nature is edgeless, many of the fine works are published outside of genre lists and never reviewed in LOCUS or THRUST. One example is Jovette Marchessault's *Lesbian Triptych*. There are also the works of Anne Cameron. But even within the field, there is the Women's Press in England, very active and influential, with reissues and new works. So even a superficial overview, by anyone not limited in either insight or knowledge of books, would have to find a startling vitality to feminist fantasy, supernatural, and science fiction even while the bulk of the field (without reference to feminism) is moribund.

Anita Alverio
3602 Dawson Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Janrae Frank's "Dead in Suburbia or Whatever Happened to Feminism in SF?" (THRUST 28) contains two major fallacies

which I believe discredit her thesis of the co-opting of 1970s feminism by 1980s egalitarianism.

My first observation centers on Frank's definition of feminism from 1975-1980 as the literary battle against oppressors of the patriarchy. That is too exclusive. The movement needs to be redefined in terms of all that was happening—all the writing which was produced in SF, for example, by and about women redefining ourselves and our relation to society.

The "strident" literature which declared men not only the enemy but a separate species, often termed lesbian separatist fiction, was one subgenre of feminist writing. Indeed it was a very popular and powerfully influential subgenre. In addition to Joanna Russ and Suzy McKee Charnas, I would call attention to the late James Tiptree Jr./Roccoona Sheldon/Alice Sheldon who produced the very powerful "The Women Men Don't See" (1973) and "Houston, Houston, Do You Read?" (1976). Even Marion Zimmer

Bradley dabbled with a rejection of men in a separate world of Guild-mothers in at least one Darkover novel (*The Shattered Chain*, 1976). But of course SF was not isolated from the mainstream in the popularity of this exploration as can be deduced from a scan of mainstream women's literature during this period.

This is not to argue that a woman on center stage ever was automatically a feminist statement in and of itself (woman as victim awaiting rescue may be center focus in a story but that doesn't fit a feminist definition). However, there were other aspects of feminist writing in the mid- and late-'70s. Frank's too narrow labelling prevents her from seeing that the egalitarian feminists, for example, were also a subgenre flourishing then. Kate Wilhelm in *The Clewiston Test* (1976) raised the important issues of a successful married professional suddenly forced to redefine success, power, and love. The character made painful but powerful choices for herself, and rejected as Frank uses the term, the fascist masculine beliefs not only of her husband but also of her female co-worker. The Witchworld series of Andre Norton in the early to mid-'70s, later followed by the Morgaine trilogy of C. J. Cherryh (late '70s) involved strong women who chose to work with a new breed of man. Cherryh's *Arafel Saga* (1979-1983) appeared to suggest that the two sexes had to work together to survive.

And if the "essence of feminist writings has been to explore female realities", as Frank says, then feminism is alive and well in science fantasy. One need only pick up, for example, Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Sword and Sorceress* anthologies (especially volume IV, 1987) to discover women and men writing stories exploring women's various choices and the consequences of those choices, with an emphasis on active participation in the process.

The fact that we now see women-centered plots so frequently that we take them for granted is no reason to discount the importance of that victory—in the not too distant past there were almost no stories like this to identify with. Far from being a sign of the death of feminism, this should be seen as the triumph of the women's movement.

Janrae Frank
8033 Sunset Blvd., Suite 4050

Los Angeles, CA 90046

There is a somewhat confusing, but humorous typo in my article "Dead in Suburbia" in *THRUST* 28. On page 12, column three, second from the bottom paragraph, the phrase "gender-popularity" should read "gender-polarity". Considering the reactions of Russ' women to the opposite sex in *The Female Man*, perhaps Gender-Unpopularity might have been closer to the facts.

In retrospect, I feel that the works of Pamela Sargent and the late James Tiptree Jr. should have been included in my article.

[Sorry about the error. It got through three of us, including me. - DDF]

Dean R. Lambe
State Route 676
P.O. Box 14
Watertown, OH 45787

Your suggestion, in response to Pete Rogan's letter about STARDATE past and present, that *THRUST* became a clearinghouse for howlers about Associates International accounts payable is generous, but unnecessary. That situation is under resolution by the SFWA Grievance Committee—which, with respect to shorter works, is me. All anyone has to do is ask. In fact, as has long been my policy, if it concerns an ongoing action initiated by a SFWA member, help will be provided to non-members as well. I've put a lot of time into resolution of this mess during the past year.

And yes, under threat of legal action, Associates International has finally offered a "kill fee" for accepted but unpublished work. For the record, contrary to Mr. Rogan's claim, nobody named Dave Smith has been taking phone calls at Associates International for over a year, and calls to that Delaware number (weekly or otherwise) are a waste of time. Only the very naive assume that business complaints are resolved by telephone in this country; justice is blind, lawyers and judges need the feel of paper.

[Thanks for the information. I should have contacted the SFWA Grievance Committee a long time ago, now that you mention it. But I must say that SFWA has been very quiet about its work regarding STARDATE; I have seen no mention of it in any of the publications I get as an associate member. - DDF]

Darrell Schweitzer
113 Deepdale Road
Stratford, PA 19087

THRUST and SF EYE aren't the only news/review magazines left. You are overlooking Robert Garcia's very slick *AMERICAN FANTASY*, which has a circulation of about 3000 and production values like those of the old STARSHIP. (Or a little better. The paper is slick.)

Another factual issue is Mark McGarry's review of Stephen King's *Misery*. It's a perfectly sensible review, but—maybe I'm sensitive to this because I just finished rushing out an article, "Stephen King as a Science Fiction Writer" for an Underwood-Miller

book—I haven't seen so many closely-packed errors of fact since Barry Malzberg's *Engines of the Night*. In the first paragraph: King did not single-handedly make the horror novel popular. Ira Levin and William Peter Blatty had a lot to do with it. *The Stand* is not science fiction by common definition, since it involves overtly supernatural beings, supernatural events, and a genuine, God-sent miracle at the end. The majority of the Bachman books are not science fiction—*Rage* and *Roadwork* are contemporary and realistic; *Thinner* is supernatural horror, involving a Gypsy curse; only two, *The Long Walk* and *The Running Man* are discernably science fiction.

I can't even say that I disagree with what Mark says, but when he stumbles again and again and again in such a short space, it is disconcerting.

I rather like Lawrence Watt-Evans' attempt to sum up the alleged Cyberpunk/Cyberprep controversy. But it is a mistake to compare this to New Wave vs. Old Wave. The focus is much narrower. People are not reacting so much to the fiction, but to the image, and specifically to a few pretentious manifestos, mostly proclaimed by John Shirley. Imagine that the whole New Wave controversy had been over Michael Moorcock's editorials and nothing more.

Cyberprep is a joke, a parody of the self-proclaimed Movement. If it means anything, it means, rather patronizingly, "Yes, yes, you're going to change the whole field... we've heard it all before." Again, a reaction to the manifestos, not to the fiction. I have no idea what the Cyberprep founders think of the works of Gibson, Shirley, Shiner, Sterling, and the rest—or if they have even read them.

In essence, we have Nothing directed against Very Little, more of a teaspoon tempest, since it doesn't rate a teapot. I hasten to point out that there is no Cyberprep literature. No one is writing Cyberprep stories. There will never be a Cyberprep equivalent of *Mirrorshades*. I believe Esther Friesner has sold a Cyberprep poem to AMAZING, but that's all there is.

There are however Cyberprep colors, Cyberprep manners, and a certain code. I see from her letter in the current issue that it's just as well that Jessica Salmonson was turned away from that Cyberprep Tea. She may have what she thinks is a sense of humor, but she would never make the grade in Cyberprep. She hasn't learned to be nice.

I forgot about *AMERICAN FANTASY*, but then again I have never seen it, just some advertisements. I have seen no word that more than one issue has appeared. Garda is the same person, I believe, who published several modest issues of the *CHICAGO FANTASY NEWSLETTER* a few years ago. I think a magazine needs more than one issue to be eligible for a Hugo.

The Stand, I think, was fantasy with SF motifs. - DDF

George Adis
Tufts University
Medford, MA 02155

As always, I enjoyed the latest *THRUST* [28], although I did miss some of the usual columnists. I would like to take issue with one specific line in your editorial though: "Next year, based on his phenomenal work this

year, Dozois should be a clear winner [for best-editor Hugo]."

I'm not sure what you think constitutes "phenomenal" work. As discussed in Dean W. Smith's recent article in *SHORT FORM*, it certainly isn't publishing new writers--under Dozois, ASIMOV'S has virtually eliminated the practice of publishing new writers, publishing fewer first stories than any of the previous editors or, for that matter, than any of the other major magazines during the same period. It certainly isn't in the way he treats writers. From my own experience (and that of other writers I know who have submitted to ASIMOV'S in the last two years) I would call Dozois's work barely professional. In general, Dozois keeps story submissions for three to six months before returning them without comment. This is about three times as long as it takes other magazines to consider a manuscript. I know of at least one (professional) writer who has stopped submitting to ASIMOV'S because of the time it takes to hear back from Dozois compared to, for example, the two-week response time typical of Pat Price of the four-weeks it takes for Ellen Datlow to consider a story. "Phenomenal," maybe, if phenomenally slow is qualification for a Hugo.

[I was, of course, judging Dozois on the quality of the fiction has has published in ASIMOV'S this year, not his failure to publish lesser quality work by newer writers or his speed in answering his mail. Although those two factors may be important to some (new writers like yourself), I don't think they are particularly relevant to the editor Hugo. It is the quality of the work that counts, and Dozois in 1987 has published more than half of the best (award-quality) SF in the field, including one or more works by Swanwick, Card, Wolfe, Rucker, Blaylock, McDevitt, Turtledove, Shepard, Murphy, Sterling, Pohl, Kress, Cadigan, Kelly, Sheffield, Yolen, Silverberg, Tiptree, Weiner, Fowler, Robinson (Kim Stanley), Goldstein, Maddox, Dann, Watson, Ellison, Willis, Shiner, Waldrop and Effinger, a list that includes virtually all of the best of today's authors writing short SF. And these authors were published at a rate of 3, 4, 5 or even 6 stories per issue. I don't recall any magazine in past years dominating the field to the degree that ASIMOV'S did this year. - DDF]

Taras Wolansky
Clay Hill Rd.
Kerhonkson, NY 12446

Reading Alexis Gilliland's letter in *THRUST* 27, I was forcibly reminded that a lot of people in the science fiction field still take the nuclear winter hypothesis more seriously than it deserves. I don't like it when SF writers purvey obsolete science, so I thought I'd do my part to forestall this. My remarks are based upon "Climate Modeling" by Stephen H. Schneider, the cover article in the May, 1987 *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN*.

It must first be understood that the so-called TTAPS (Turco- Toon-Ackerman-Pollack-Sagan) study from which derives the concept of a nuclear winter was only preliminary. It seeks to model the climate of the earth--but of a simplified earth with no winds, no oceans, no seasons. This was nothing wrong with this in a first effort.

Since then, however, the models have become more sophisticated, more like the real earth. What Schneider and others have found is, first, no very significant effect on climate if a war occurs in the fall or winter. If it does occur in the spring or summer, the temperature drop will be one-half that predicted by TTAPS in inland areas; one-tenth in coastal areas. On the other hand, the smoke clouds will be patchy, so quick freezes may destroy crops anywhere, in a kind of "weather roulette".

Schneider concludes: "In the aftermath of a nuclear war, present scientific knowledge suggests, the earth would not be consigned to the insects, and the human species would almost certainly not become extinct. But the climatic effects might nonetheless be calamitous, and they could extend the impact of the war to billions of people who live far from the blast zones."

[I think that most of us in both the SF and scientific communities are aware that improved modeling work on nuclear aftermaths is continuing to be developed. But I find myself remarkably uninterested in further refinements regarding the exact degrees of temperature drop for various megaton levels exploding over various areas. I've always believed that the value of TTAPS was psychological, not scientific. It has quite effectively reinforced in people's minds the "chilling" (but far from novel) concept that nuclear war will affect many innocent victims, and completely destroy our way of life. Our civilization seems to need reminding every decade or so. - DDF]



REVIEWS (Continued From Page 27)

first appeared in ASIMOV'S in 1983, but only "Belling Martha" struck me as truly science fictional and even it is pure slice--a character and situation set up, the story abruptly ended before a plot could develop. The other two from ASIMOV'S are "Greek" and "Her Furry Face"--both have only slight SF elements and only "Her Furry Face" has a recognizable plot.

Of the remaining tales only "The Silent Cradle" and "Petit Mal" are even marginally SF--a phantom baby grows up and moves away in the first, a series of non-stop seizures destroys a life in the second. The other five stories are rather sad slices-of-life about ordinary people doing something bizarre things, but none of them involves a sense of wonder (except, perhaps, "The Window Jesus") and I doubt they'd appeal to most SF readers. It's nice to see that mainstream writers and publishers are dabbling in fantastic fiction from time to time, but I'm afraid that Leigh Kennedy's *Faces* is not a collection I can recommend very highly.

ADS

UNCLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS are 20 cents per word per insertion, minimum 20 words. Quantity discounts: 10% for three issues, 20% for six issues. All ads must be prepaid. Also 10% discount for booksellers carrying *THRUST*. Deadlines are January 31, April 30, July 31 and October 31. Send copy with payment to *Thrust Publications*, 8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, MD 20877.

SF-FANTASY magazines, books (new and used), 64-page catalog \$1.00. Collections purchased. Robert Madie, 4406 Bestor Drive, Rockville, MD 20853. [98]

FREE Catalog of Science Fiction and Fantasy Books, hardcover, paperbacks, first editions. Pelanor Books, P.O. Box 3920, Stuyvesant Plaza, Albany, NY 12203. [29]

I've been selling reasonably priced science fiction, fantasy, and horror paperbacks, hardcovers and magazines since 1987. Free catalogs! Pandora's Books Ltd., Box TH-54, Neche, ND 58265. [31]

"SEE THROUGH PEOPLE 50 WAYS"
Unmask Human Monsters! Be strong, safe, heroic. Amazing \$1 Booklet. NEWLIFE, Box 275-HJ, Boulder City, NV 89005. [28]

SF MAIL LISTS for sale. Thousands of SF fans and readers, SF book stores, etc. on mailing labels, at lowest costs anywhere. Custom sorted, national or local. Perfect for SF & F sci-fi mail order dealers and conventions! Write for full information to *Thrust Publications*, 8217 Langport Terrace, Gaithersburg, MD 20877. [99]

Washington's Only Science Fiction And Mystery Specialty Book Shop

MOONSTONE BOOKCELLARS INC.*



2145 Penn Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20037
OPEN: Mon.-Sat. 11-6
Sunday 11-5
OPEN MONDAYS

(202) 659-2600

On Darkover, those gifted with *laran*
are the truly powerful.

Marion Zimmer Bradley

With The Friends of Darkover

Red Sun Of Darkover

In this unforgettable journey into the heart of Darkovan power, Marion Zimmer Bradley and The Friends of Darkover explore exciting new territory. From a Tower, matrix-trapped in time, to the early days of Regis Hastur's reign...

from Ariada Aillard's pact with the chieren, the legendary sea people of Darkover, to a dragon that holds the land in a winterly grasp...here is an unforgettable new addition to the magnificent epic.

\$3.95 Distributed by NAL



DAW  FANTASY

"The most interesting author of science fiction writing in English today"

*The New York Times
Book Review*

The bestselling author of *Dhalgren* continues the acclaimed Neverÿon saga with this new novel of passion and politics, dreams and dragons in a richly imagined barbarian world. Here is a master of the genre at the peak of his powers!

"One of the most important SF writers of the present generation...a fascinating writer who has invented a new style."

—Umberto Eco, author of *The Name of the Rose*

THE BRIDGE OF LOST DESIRE



A FANTASY BY
SAMUEL R. DELANY
WINNER OF THE HUGO AND NEBULA AWARDS



ARBOR HOUSE
A member of the Hearst Trade Book Group

Where imagination finds a home.